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ABSTRACT

No nationally representative study of student suspensions has yet explored why, instead of which, students are suspended and whether suspensions may result from school characteristics as well as student behavior. Using stepwise regression, this study analyzed national data on students' suspensions, misbehavior, antisocial attitudes, perceptions of teacher interest, race, and Grade Point Average; teachers' race and perceptions of student problem-solving capacity and proportion of low-ability students; and the schools' proportion of white students, fairness and consistency in student governance, and degree of adherence to administrative rules or teacher discretion in handling discipline. Data came from questionnaire responses from 31,373 students, 641 principals, and 23,895 teachers in a stratified random sample of 641 public secondary schools drawn from the 1976 National Institute of Education (NIE) national Safe School Study. The results showed that suspension does have a basis in student attitudes and behavior but is more strongly affected by school factors. School characteristics were more likely to lead to suspensions where (1) teachers believed that students could not solve problems, (2) students perceived teachers as uninterested in them, (3) schools handled discipline largely by administrative rules, (4) school governance of students was inconsistent or unfair, and (5) school personnel had relatively high degrees of academic and racial bias. (Project Director/RW)

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The Foundations of Student Suspension

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Honolulu, Hawaii

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University of Hawaii
Summer, 1980

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is the first nationally representative study of student suspensions to go beyond school records of who is suspended and explore the question of why students are suspended. As such, it has one overriding purpose; that is, to examine the fundamental nature of student suspension. Is suspension purely a matter of student misbehavior, and therefore an individual phenomenon, or is it also a result of certain characteristics of schools, and therefore a school phenomenon?

Why should we be interested in this particular question? The reason will become clear as our discussion progresses. However, at this point it is important to stress that whether suspension is an individual phenomenon or a school phenomenon is indeed a crucial question that has far-reaching implications regarding how student suspension problems could be solved. Depending on how the empirical evidence turns out, the two different answers to this question call for two radically different solutions to the problem of student suspension. If student suspension is strictly a matter of student misconduct, then the ultimate strategy in solving the suspension problem must be directed toward finding promising ways to reduce student misbehavior and to induce more socially acceptable behavior among students. On the other hand, if suspension is largely a school phenomenon, then the solution calls for changes in schools and efforts aimed at changing student behavior will prove to be misguided. To begin our discussion, we will first summarize the major issues which have been raised concerning student suspension.

Suspension of students from school has been a subject of considerable public debate in recent years (Neill, 1976; Garibaldi, 1979). The public debate covers a wide range of issues. One of the most important issues deals with the provision of procedural due process in suspension cases. Some observers charge that suspension takes place frequently without students being given oral or written notice of the charges against them, and without them having the opportunity to present their side of the story at a hearing. The lack of due process provisions such as notice and hearing has been considered particularly serious in short term suspension cases (Lines, 1977).

In 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court in two separate decisions stated that students facing temporary suspension have property and liberty interests substantial enough to qualify them for protection under the due process clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The first decision (Goss v. Lopez)[1] mandated minimum due process procedures for students in suspension cases and the second (Wood v. Strickland)[2] made school boards liable for damages in such cases. The Supreme Court's affirmation of the rights of students to due process was applauded by those who advocate reforms in disciplinary practices at schools. To others, however, schools in general have not abused the individual rights of the students who are accused of violating the school rules. The latter argue that it is not the first impulse of school administrators to suspend or expel students when confronted with student misconduct. They also say that suspension practices have been largely fair with due process procedures being closely followed. To them,

the Supreme Court's requirement of minimum due process was considered as a further erosion of the power and the ability of school administrators to run schools for the best interest of the majority of the students.

Other issues besides the general question of procedural due process make suspension a subject of public debate. More specifically, suspension as a problem attracts considerable national attention because of the possibility of discrimination, especially racial discrimination; this has been pointed out by civil rights and child advocacy groups. Among others, the Children's Defense Fund in its two well-known reports asserts that minority pupils, especially black pupils, have been suspended at a rate highly disproportionate to their total enrollment.[3] The disproportionately high suspension rate for blacks and other minorities in comparison to that for whites is considered to be evidence of racial discrimination in disciplinary actions. However, the debate continues.

There are some who consider higher rates of suspension among minority students to be simply a product of more misbehavior at school. Others suggest that disproportionate suspension rates for minorities could be better explained by the fact that schools are middle class institutions with middle class people teaching and administering them. It is the different cultural orientation of the largely low socio-economic status minority students in conflict with the middle class orientation of the school that explains their higher suspension rate, not racial bias or racial discrimination. Still others consider that academic records, not race, are the better explanation of student suspension, since regardless of race, most suspended students are academically deficient (see Neill, 1976).

Furthermore, the fundamental value of suspension has also been debated. To the opponents of suspension, it is not considered helpful to suspend students. They have emphasized the plight of students during the period of being pushed out of schools, such as the traumatic feeling of loss of self-respect and of being unwanted, the increasing chance of coming into contact with a delinquent subculture, the vicious cyclical effects of being unable to catch up with school work, and the stigma among peers after suspension (Williams, 1979). They have also argued that suspended students have frequently become school dropouts as a result. The severely damaging consequences of suspension thus greatly outweigh whatever potential disciplinary value it has.

They have further suggested that suspension is often a knee-jerk response to student misbehavior on the part of school personnel (Neill, 1976). The temporary removal of students from school not only fails to solve the problem of student misbehavior, but the arbitrariness of such removal could worsen school disciplinary problems and thus create an opposite effect (Williams, 1979).

To the proponents of suspension, however, suspension is an integral part of the teaching and learning process in school. Although some consider suspension a necessary means to cope with student misconduct, most regard it as a stop-gap measure needed for protecting individuals and school property and for the smooth running of the educational process in school. They suggest that suspension, like any other disciplinary measures, may at least reduce the chances of recurrence of misbehavior for a short period of time immediately after the suspension. They argue that it serves the purpose of pointing out

the seriousness of misconduct, thus helping students develop self-control and acceptable behavior at school. It may also serve as a deterrent, an instruction to other students not to commit the kind of behavior for which suspension is imposed. In addition, the proponents of suspension have also viewed suspension as being needed sometimes to get parents involved in situations where they have not previously cooperated with the school in its efforts to solve the behavior problems of their children at school. More philosophically, the proponents have also argued that the majority of the students who are interested in learning should not have to suffer from the constant disruption of the very few (Neill, 1976; Garibaldi, 1979; U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, 1976).

Due process problems, racial discrimination, inappropriate uses of suspension, and the fundamental disciplinary value of suspension, which we have mentioned, have been the four focal areas in the public debates on student suspension. The intensity involved in these debates is not simply a matter of different personal convictions or ideological positions between the proponents and opponents on each of these issues. It is also indicative of the great importance of student suspension as a problem which needs serious considerations in the nation's public schools. In these debates, proponents and opponents alike have raised many important questions.

Even without statistical information, it should be clear that while students are suspended for misbehavior or for violation of school rules, not all the misbehaving students experience suspension. Misbehavior such as smoking at school could be grounds for suspension, but not all smoking on school grounds leads to suspension. This means that there are other factors involved.

What then are the other factors that contribute to suspension? We still do not know. More systematic research is thus badly needed. From the records of the public debates, it is rather clear that less suspension is commonly preferred by both proponents and opponents of student suspension. Since it seems widely agreed that suspensions are unfortunate, we will assume in this report that a reduction of suspension is a worthwhile goal. We will not make very many concrete recommendations about how to reduce suspensions, however. Without further empirical knowledge about the nature of the suspension process, any policy and efforts to reduce suspensions would run a high risk of misdirection.

With this in mind, our purpose in this study is to examine some fundamental factors influencing student suspensions, rather than to inquire into the major issues of the debates. Although our discussion will also have important bearing on some of the issues in the debate, it is our firm belief that only through further identification of the fundamental factors involved can we improve our understanding of student suspensions as a problem, and only when we have a better understanding of the various dimensions of the student suspension problem can we then have a better sense of direction in the formulation and selection of policy alternatives to resolve this problem.

This study uses data collected by the Congressionally mandated Safe School Study which was intended to answer questions related to student misbehavior and crimes at school rather than those related to student suspension. Nevertheless, these large scale national data allow us to examine some important questions about student suspensions. Readers who wish to know more about

student misbehavior at school are encouraged to consult the Safe School Study Report, especially Appendix A and Chapter 5 (Wu, 1978a; Wu 1978b; Crain, 1978).

The Safe School Study was intended to answer a number of questions related to crimes and violence in the nation's public schools. It was based on a national survey in 1976 of more than 4500 elementary and secondary schools. This sample of schools consisted of two subsamples--3910 "Phase I" study schools and 641 "Phase II- study schools--different in the amount of information which was collected about each. To study suspensions, here we utilize the more detailed data pertaining to the Phase II schools. These 641 schools were selected to represent all public secondary schools in the entire nation through a two-staged stratified sampling procedure that took into consideration the geographic location (region), the type of community (urban, suburban, and rural), educational level (junior and senior high schools), and the school size (student enrollment). The data sets obtained from these schools included the results of a mail survey of the school principals, a self-administered questionnaire survey of all 23,895 of their teachers, and the on-site self-administered questionnaire survey of 31,373 students randomly selected from these schools. As the reader will notice later, in this study we take advantage of all of these three subsets of data for various analytical purposes.

Our discussion here on student suspensions is divided as follows. In Chapter 2, we discuss the extent of suspensions among students. The description and discussion of the extent of student suspensions in this chapter are not meant for national estimates or projections. They are simply presented to give the reader a rough view of the likelihood of students being suspended and of some general broad patterns. In Chapter 3, we will discuss the relationship between student misbehavior at school and suspension. After examining student misbehavior as the most obvious factor in suspension, additional factors are then considered in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter 4, we examine the possibility of teachers' judgments and attitudes as potential factors in suspension. In Chapter 5, we examine whether student suspension is related to the administrative structure of schools in the handling of student disciplinary matters. In Chapter 6, we consider the possibility of academic ability as a potential factor in suspension. And finally in Chapter 7, the possibility of the interference of racial bias is discussed. Chapter 8 then summarizes the major findings and insights that we have developed throughout this monograph.

FOOTNOTES

1 See Goss v. Lopez, 95 Supreme Court 729, 1975.

2 See Wood v. Strickland, 95 Supreme Court 992, 1975. For a general discussion on the implications of Wood v. Strickland and Goss v. Lopez, see Ronald J. Anson and Peter J. Kuriloff (eds.), Students' Right to Due Process: Professional discretion and liability, Educational Resolrces Division, Capital Publications, Inc., 1975, and see also Shirley Boes Neill, Suspensions and Expulsions: Current trends in school policies and programs, National School Public Relations Association, 1976.

3 Marion Wright Edelman, Rochelle Beck, and Paul V. Smith, School Suspensions: Are they helping children? Cambridge, Mass.: Children's Defense Fund, 1975, and also an earlier report, Children Out of School in America, Children's Defense Fund, 1974.

CHAPTER II

THE EXTENT OF STUDENT SUSPENSION

How frequently are students suspended from school? The purpose of this chapter is to provide an answer to this question. The national survey data to be presented here were collected by the Safe School Study in 1976, as explained in the previous chapter. In this chapter, to see how widespread is the experience of being suspended from school, we rely on responses from the 31,373 surveyed students to the following question which was included in the self-administered questionnaire: "Have you ever been suspended from this school?" Each student could answer either "yes" or "no" -- the only two legitimate answers allowed. Among the 31,373 students in the survey, 31,103 students provided such legitimate answers; the other 270 did not. Our discussion of the extent of student suspension is based upon the responses of these 31,103 students, ranging from seventh to twelfth graders. Note that the question as worded above did not specify the time at which the suspension took place, neither did it indicate the number of times or the duration of the suspension(s). Discussion of such matters is therefore impossible. Our discussion will focus instead on the question of how likely it is for students to experience suspension during their secondary school years.

There are limitations to these data. One is the omission of students who were absent at the time of the questionnaire administration, including those who were suspended then. This undoubtedly results in a low estimate of students with suspension experience. Other limitations will be noted as they occur. However, the purpose of this report is not to present precise estimates of suspension rates, but rather to explore various factors which may help to explain variations in suspension rates. For this purpose, the relative levels of suspensions are important, rather than their exact number.

Probability of Suspension by Educational Level and Community Type

Of the 31,103 students surveyed, 3,455 indicated that they had been suspended from their schools, and the rest reported that they had had no such experience. In other words, about 11 percent of the high school students surveyed had been suspended at least once from their school. However, as we classify the students according to the educational level and the type of community in which their schools are located, we notice that the chances of being suspended from school are not equal for all students.

Table 2.1 demonstrates that more students in urban schools are suspended than are students attending suburban or rural schools. And in turn, more suburban students are suspended than are rural students within the same kinds of schools. Considering junior and senior high school students separately, we notice that in both cases urban school students have the highest suspension rates, suburban school students the second highest, and rural school students the lowest rates. Urban schools are defined as those within a city of 50,000 or more population. Suburban schools are located in the remainder of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) which have such a city as their center. Rural schools are located in small towns and rural areas outside of SMSAs.

In urban areas, about 15 percent of the students in both types of schools are suspended, but in suburban areas 13 percent of the senior high students have been suspended while only 8 percent of the junior high students have had the same experience. In rural areas, more than 9 percent of senior high school students have been suspended from school as compared to less than 7 percent for the junior high students. The generally higher percentage of senior high school students suspended may in part be because of the possibility that senior high school students on the average stay in their schools for a longer period of time due to many senior high schools being four year schools. Hence their students could have a longer period of exposure to the chance of being suspended. We turn now to this possibility.

Probability of Suspension by Grade Level

In general more senior high than junior high school students have been suspended from their schools. We have interpreted this as reflecting the more widespread use of suspension by senior high schools. The possibility exists, however, that this may be due to the senior high school students as a whole having a longer period of attendance at their present schools. If this were true, then when we control for the duration of attendance, the senior high school students should no longer have a higher suspension rate.

Is the higher suspension rate among senior high school students a matter of their longer attendance rather than more frequent suspensions carried out by their schools? In Table 2.2, we compare suspension rates between senior and junior high school students by the duration of their attendance. Each student was asked how long he or she had gone to the school at the time of questionnaire administration. The answer to this question enables us to place students into one of four broad duration of attendance categories: 1) less than one year, 2) one or two years, 3) three or four years and 4) five or more years. The results show that except in urban communities when students have been in school for three years or longer, senior high school students have a higher suspension rate in all four duration categories. The difference is most marked among the first-year students. In urban areas, 10 percent of the first year senior high students were suspended as compared to 9 percent for the junior high students. In suburban communities, 9 percent of the senior high students were suspended during their first year at school as compared to 5 percent among the first year junior high students. The comparable figures in rural areas are 8 for the senior high students and 4 for the junior high students. The figures presented in Table 2.2 are rough; they cannot be used in the computation of an incremental change of suspension rates from one time point to another. Neither can they be considered to be the actual extent of suspension among students in high schools. One obvious reason is that the available information does not take into consideration dropouts or transferred students, many of whom presumably had been suspended prior to their exit from their schools. The suspension rate among students who have been in school for five year or more is lower in some cases than the rate for students who have been in school for only three or four years, as we see in Table 2.2 for the suburban and rural schools. This could well indicate that many suspended students drop out before they reach the fifth year of school or reflect a reduced role for low suspension in multigrade consolidated schools.

For these reasons, the probability of a student being suspended from school is probably underestimated in these analyses. But dropout rates are generally higher among older students, so complete suspension rates for them might be even higher. We conclude that higher suspension rates among the senior high students in fact indicate that their schools do suspend more students each year, and are not due to a longer period of attendance.

Suspension rates for each of the secondary school years can also be analyzed. These grade-specific suspension rates are closely related to the suspension rates by duration of attendance, because students in the higher grades are likely to have been in school longer. However the combination of grade-specific suspension rates with type of school offers a better view of different suspension rates from one period of time to another. The suspension rates for seventh through ninth graders in the junior high schools and ninth through twelfth graders in the senior high schools are reported in Table 2.3. The information reported here together with that reported in Table 2.2 suggests that students are most likely to be suspended during their first year in school. Otherwise, the figures for the second-year students should be about twice as high as those for the first-year students. We cannot gauge the extent of forgetting which occurs over the longer period, however, even though suspension is presumably a serious event which should be remembered better than many other life events. This may limit the accuracy of reporting on suspensions which occurred longer ago, and could help account for the lack of proportionate increases in suspensions with longer duration of attendance.

In urban senior high schools, 16 percent of the seniors were suspended at least once in the three to four years that they attended school. However, 11 percent of the ninth graders in the same high schools were suspended during only one year of attendance. This suggests that the students who will be suspended in high school appear to be suspended during thier first year, and as the students move to the upper grades and stay in school for a longer period, the additional risk of being suspended for the first time decreases. In junior high schools, student suspensions display a somewhat different pattern--although a substantial number of students were suspended in the seventh grade, over twice as many ninth graders were suspended from junior high school as seventh graders, suggesting that many ninth graders are suspended for the first time in their last year of junior high school.

The implication of this is worth exploring. The fact that first suspensions so frequently occur in the seventh grade in junior high school and in the ninth grade in senior high school suggests that the first year in a new school may be a difficult period as students have to adapt to the new environment. Does this suggest that during the first year students display more behavior problems, or does it imply that during the first year students are simply not familiar with the school rules and disciplinary practices? If the latter is true, they may get suspended more, not so much because their behavior is different from students in the higher grades, but because they have not been in school long enough to be able to avoid being caught and suspended when they misbehave. Still there are other possibilities: Could it be that school authorities are somewhat more strict with beginning students, over whom they are eager to exercise their control?

Or has suspension been used by schools simply as a way of teaching the rules to incoming students? From another standpoint, the fact that ninth graders in both junior high and senior high schools are frequently suspended seems to suggest that this may be a particularly difficult period of middle adolescence. If so, then what are the kinds of problems which trouble these students, cause them to misbehave, and eventually lead them to be suspended? These are important questions in understanding the process of suspension. Unfortunately, our data cannot adequately give satisfactory answers here. Further studies are needed to clarify which of these or other interpretations are most plausible.

Probability of Suspension by Sex, Race, and Socio-Economic Status

The probability of suspension from school for a student not only varies according to the type of community in which the school is located and the level of the school, it also varies according to the student's sex, race, and socio-economic background. Table 2.4 shows that male students in every kind of school location and level are more likely to be suspended than their female counterparts. The percentage of students with suspension experience is higher for male than it is for female students in all the six subgroups of schools.

Table 2.5 shows the suspension rates for various racial groups. We notice that the percentage of students with suspension experience is generally lowest for white students, highest for black students, and in between for the other nonwhite minorities such as American Indians, Asian Americans, and Spanish Americans. These suspension rates indicate that the black students are at least twice as likely as whites to have been suspended. This again holds true in all the six subgroups of schools.

Tables 2.6 and 2.7 show the suspension rates for students who differ in family socio-economic status. In Table 2.6, we notice that students whose fathers do not have a full-time job are more likely to have suspension experience than those whose fathers do. In Table 2.7, we notice that the students who receive free lunches at school are more likely to have suspension experience than those who do not. The combination of Tables 2.6 and 2.7 thus indicates that, in general, students whose families are at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum tend to be more frequently suspended from school.

The different suspension rates experienced by students of different sexes, racial groups, and socio-economic status are clear indications of the fact that not all students are equally prone to be suspended. Why, then, are some students more likely to be suspended than others? We will not discuss this question at this time. Some of the major factors that explain students' suspension experience will gradually emerge as our discussion progresses in subsequent chapters. The different suspension rates for different racial groups as reported in Table 2.5 seem to suggest the possibility of racial discrimination. Whether racial bias is a factor in student suspensions will be discussed later in Chapter 7 when other related factors will also be discussed.

Table 2.1 Percentage of students suspended from their current schools at least once, by school location and by school level* .

School location+ and level	Percentage of students who have been suspended	Percentage of students who have not been suspended	Total
Urban junior high schools	15	85	100 (5490)
Urban senior high schools	15	85	100 (4773)
Suburban junior high schools	8	92	100 (6771)
Suburban senior high schools	13	87	100 (5813)
Rural junior high schools	7	93	100 (4121)
Rural senior high schools	9	91	100 (4135)
All schools	11	89	100 (31103)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the number of students on which each percentage is based.

+ Urban schools are located within cities of 50,000 or more population; suburban schools are located in the remainder of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) which have such a city as their center. Rural schools are located in small towns and rural areas outside of SMSAs.

Table 2.2 Percentage of students suspended from their current schools at least once by duration of attendance and by school location and school level.+

Duration of attendance*	School location and level					
	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Less than 1 year	9 (1955)	10 (1641)	5 (1856)	9 (1656)	4 (990)	8 (977)
1 or 2 year	15 (2333)	16 (1692)	8 (2866)	13 (1836)	8 (1481)	16 (926)
3 or 4 years	21 (791)	18 (1154)	11 (1451)	16 (1519)	8 (889)	11 (899)
5 years or more	25 (363)	20 (255)	9 (563)	14 (782)	6 (737)	8 (1317)
All students	15 (5442)	15 (4742)	8 (6736)	13 (5793)	7 (4097)	9 (4119)

+ The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of students on the basis of which the percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

* The categories presented here are taken from students' replies to the following question: "How long have you gone to this school? 1) one month or less, 2) more than one month but less than one year, 3) 1 or 2 years, 4) 3 or 4 years, 5) 5 or more years."

Table 2.3 Percentage of studetns suspended from their current schools at least once by grade level, and by school location and school level*.

Grade level+	School location and level					
	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th graders	9 (2059)		5 (2904)		5 (1770)	
8th graders	15 (2142)		9 (2805)		8 (1737)	
9th graders	22 (1217)	11 (634)	13 (1021)	9 (1081)	12 (530)	7 (789)
10th graders		15 (1632)		11 (1671)		9 (972)
11th graders		16 (1302)		14 (1574)		12 (1015)
12th graders		16 (1108)		16 (1272)		9 (826)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of students on which each percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

+ The grade level of each student is based on the self-report of the student .

Table 2.4 Percentage of students suspended from their current schools at least once by sex, and by school location and school level.*

School location and level	Male students	Female students	Male and female students
Urban junior high schools	18 (2705)	11 (2707)	14 (5412)
Urban senior high schools	18 (2270)	12 (2475)	15 (4745)
Suburban junior high schools	10 (3371)	6 (3361)	8 (6737)
Suburban senior high schools	17 (3016)	8 (2783)	13 (5799)
Rural junior high schools	8 (2053)	6 (2047)	7 (4100)
Rural senior high schools	13 (2067)	5 (2056)	9 (4123)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of students on which each percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

Table 2.5 Percentage of students suspended from their current school at least once by race+, and by school location and school level*.

School location and level	American Indians or Alaskan natives	Asian-Americans or Pacific Islanders [1]	Spanish-Americans [2]	Blacks or Afro-Americans or negroes	Whites, other than Spanish-Americans	Others
Urban junior high schools	17 (181)	14 (132)	14 (707)	23 (1676)	8 (2467)	14 (142)
Urban senior high schools	15 (104)	7 (115)	17 (436)	21 (1637)	10 (2349)	14 (69)
Suburban junior high schools	8 (264)	11 (110)	12 (247)	19 (418)	7 (5276)	10 (218)
Suburban senior high schools	23 (146)	11 (112)	17 (247)	22 (432)	11 (4643)	21 (112)
Rural junior high schools	5 (190)	6 (64)	9 (206)	15 (486)	5 (2881)	7 (148)
Rural senior high schools	14 (161)	10 (39)	8 (250)	19 (417)	8 (3097)	12 (102)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of students on which each percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

+ Race of each student is self-classified by the student based on the six categories provided in the student questionnaire.

[1] Asian-Americans include Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiians, etc.

[2] Spanish-Americans include Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Latin Americans.

Table 2.6 Percentage of students suspended from their current schools at least once by their father's employment status+ and by school location and school level*.

School location and level	Students whose fathers had a full-time job	Students whose fathers did not have a full-time job
Urban junior high schools	12 (3148)	18 (585)
Urban senior high schools	14 (1173)	16 (430)
Suburban junior high schools	7 (5463)	10 (462)
Suburban senior high schools	12 (4581)	18 (379)
Rural junior high schools	6 (3008)	11 (557)
Rural senior high schools	8 (3072)	14 (494)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of students on which each percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

+ Father's employment status is based on the reply of each student to the following question included in the student questionnarie: "If your father or stepfather lives at home with you, does he have a full-time job? 1) yes, 2) no, 3) he does not live with me."

Table 2.7 Percentage of students suspended who did and did not receive free lunches at school, by school location and school level*.

School location and level	Students who received free lunches at school[1]	Students who did not receive free lunches at school[1]	All students
Urban junior high schools	19 (1680)	12 (3617)	14 (5297)
Urban senior high schools	19 (1068)	14 (3462)	15 (4500)
Suburban junior high schools	14 (617)	7 (6003)	8 (6620)
Suburban senior high schools	22 (350)	12 (5342)	12 (5692)
Rural junior high schools	11 (978)	5 (3082)	7 (4060)
Rural senior high schools	14 (766)	8 (3318)	9 (4084)

* The numbers in the parentheses are the total number of studetns on which each percentage of students with suspension experience was calculated.

[1] Whether or not a student received free lunches at school was based on their reply to the following question included in the student questionnaire: "How do you usually get your lunch on school days? 1) pay full price at school cafeteria, 2) pay reduced price at school cafeteria, 3) get free lunch at school cafeteria, 4) bring lunch to school, 5) go home for lunch, 6) have lunch at nearby restaurant or lunch counter, 7) do not eat lunch."

CHAPTER III

ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIORAL BASIS OF STUDENT SUSPENSION

Schools have often been criticized for suspending their students arbitrarily. To what extent is this true? Or is it true at all? These are questions we will try to answer in this and the following chapters. At first, let us simply pose the question: "Is suspension totally arbitrary?" In general, we notice that a rather widely accepted presumption about suspension and other disciplinary actions is that they must be based on the student's behavior. In other words, the minimum necessary condition for the imposition of suspension is student misbehavior. If such a minimum condition is not met, then we will assert that suspension is totally arbitrary. If suspension is totally arbitrary and without any behavioral basis, then the foundation or the legitimacy of suspension becomes questionable, regardless of its practical value. Thus, whether suspension is totally arbitrary or whether suspension has a behavioral basis becomes the first question to be answered here. Empirically, then, our very first task is to examine whether in fact there is an association between students' behavior and attitudes and their actual experience of suspension.

If suspensions have a firm behavioral basis, then we should find a positive association between students' antisocial attitudes and suspension for the following reason. Clearly, antisocial attitudes must not be confused with misconduct or behavior in violation of school rules. Students are supposedly suspended because of their deviant behavior rather than their antisocial attitudes or beliefs. But normally, as in this study, we do not have information about the kinds and frequencies of deviant behavior that each individual student had committed at school. Thus, the relationship between students' behavioral profiles and suspensions cannot be directly examined. However, it is reasonable to assume that students with more antisocial attitudes are likely to engage in deviant behavior more frequently also. While people do not always act on their attitudes, attitudes do indicate tendencies toward certain actions. Following this assumption, we would expect that those students with more antisocial attitudes would be suspended from their schools more often than those with less antisocial or deviant attitudes.

To examine this relationship we first construct an antisocial attitude index. The index is constructed on the basis of individual student responses to the following eight items taken from the Student Questionnaire:

Agree-Undecided-Disagree

1) People who leave things around deserve it if their things get taken
2) Taking things from stores doesn't hurt anyone
3) People who get beat up usually asked for it
4) If you want to get ahead, you can't always be honest
5) Would you cheat on a test (if you could get away with it)
6) Would you spray paint on school walls (if .....)
7) Would you take money from other students (if.....)
8) Would you skip school (if.....)

These eight items were weighted equally in the index.

The simple Pearson correlation coefficients between this index of antisocial attitudes and the students' actual experience of suspension were calculated for each of the secondary school grades seven through twelve. These correlation coefficients are reported in Table 3.1. We notice from this Table that in fact antisocial attitudes are positively correlated with actual suspension. That is, the greater the degree to which a student displayed antisocial attitudes, the more likely that he or she had been suspended from the currently attended school at one time or another. To put this differently, we do find a greater proportion of students with suspension experience among the more antisocial students.

This holds true for all the twenty-one subsets of analysis in urban, suburban and rural junior and senior high schools. Data in Table A 3.2 of the Appendix indicate that students who are suspended are particularly likely to give antisocial responses to Items 2, 6, 7, and 8. Thus, suspended students endorse both mildly deviant (cheating, cutting school) and extremely deviant (stealing is justified, would rob other students) responses.

One could argue that the antisocial attitudes expressed in the attitude index are not the causes of suspension but are the effect, instead. Students who are suspended express more hostile attitudes because of the way they have been treated by the system. This might explain the high correlation between being suspended and approval of skipping school and cheating. However, we see no reason why being suspended from school would lead a student to approve of stealing from other students or from stores--in all likelihood they are not responsible for his suspension. It is more reasonable to argue as we have that antisocial attitudes precede suspension.

The consistent results of the twenty-one subsets of analysis covering seventh through ninth graders in junior high schools, and ninth through twelfth graders in senior high schools, in all types of communities, thus strongly indicate that suspension of students by schools does have a behavioral basis. To the extent this is true, suspension as a disciplinary measure cannot be considered totally arbitrary. We are sure that suspension in fact is a function of students' antisocial attitudes. From this we may safely infer that student misbehavior is indeed a basic determinant of whether a student will actually be suspended from school. This is further supported by the school level analysis which we will discuss below.

The correlational analysis above is based on the individual students as the analytical units. The individual level analysis allows us to draw the inference that student misbehavior is a basic determinant of suspension.

But as we have stated earlier, simply knowing that students with more antisocial attitudes are more likely to be suspended does not in itself prove that schools have high suspension rates because their students cause more problems. In order to check on that, we need to shift from the analysis of individual students to an analysis of schools, and ask whether schools with more hostile student bodies have higher suspension rates. This shift is necessary because data on hostile behavior of students are available only from teachers' reports which refer to student bodies rather than individual students.

In this school analysis, we look at each school in turn, correlating the aggregate characteristics of the student body to the percentage of the students who say they have been suspended from that school. If students' antisocial attitudes and misbehavior are truly basic determinants of suspension, then we would expect that those schools with a less antisocial and better-behaved student body should have a smaller proportion of students with suspension experience or a lower suspension rate. In the school level analysis, we construct a scale that includes both a student body's attitudes and behavior. To measure antisocial attitudes of a student body in the aggregate, we use 1) the percentage of students who disagree that "taking things from stores doesn't hurt anyone, 2) the percentage of students who disagree that "if you want to get ahead, you can't always be honest," 3) the percentage of students who say that they would spray paint on school walls, and 4) the percentage of students who say they would take money from other students. These four indicators of student attitudes are taken from the eight items included in the individual antisocial attitudes index. To measure the extent of good behavior among students, we use two indicators: 1) the percentage of teachers who say that they were never sworn at by their students, and 2) the percentage of teachers who say that they were never threatened by their students. All of these six attitudinal and behavioral indicators are shown to be negatively correlated with the level of suspension or the percentage of students with suspension experience (See Table A 3.5).

In view of the fact that all of the four attitudinal indicators and the two behavioral indicators are negatively correlated with the percentage of students with suspension experience, and the fact all of these six indicators are intercorrelated, we further develop a scale that will maximize the common variance shared by these six indicators. This scale is called here the attitudes/behavior scale. In Table 3.2, we show that the schools' scores on this scale are significantly correlated with their student bodies' suspension experience. This holds true both for junior high and senior high schools, regardless of the type of community. Thus, the school level analysis together with the individual level analysis previously discussed, provides unmistakable evidence that student behavior and atiitudes are in fact a basic determinant of student suspension. From the results of the school level analysis shown in Table 3.2, we further notice that the extent of student suspension experience is better explained by student attitudes/behavior in junior high schools than in senior high schools in the same kinds of localities.*

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* Although tests of significance are shown in Table 3.2 and the other tables, they are rarely discussed in this report. In general, statistical significance is apparent in the regularity of the results across subgroups. For example in Table 3.2, there is only one chance in 64 that random sampling would produce 6 separate negative regression coefficients. In some of our tables only 5 of the coefficients are in the expected direction; there are 7 chances in 64 of this occurring by chance. In some other tables; we separate the data by grade level as well as type of school, giving us 21 separate coefficients. There is a 1% chance of obtaining 17 of the 21 signs in the predicted direction, and a less than 5% chance of obtaining 15 or more signs in the expected direction. By these criteria every variable in the multiple regression equation reported here is statistically significant when the pattern of results across subgroups is compared.

The fact that individual students' attitudes and behavior are basic determinants of suspension does not mean that they are the only determinants of suspension. Nor could we conclude from these findings that suspension is therefore inevitable as schools are confronted with student misbehavior. The remainder of this report is devoted to determining whether suspension is in part the result of school policies rather than simply of student behavior. Would a student be equally likely to be suspended regardless of which school he attended, or would he be more likely to be suspended from some schools than from others? To answer this question, we will look at the effect on suspension of a variety of school characteristics. In each case we will compare the power of the school characteristic to predict student suspension to the power of the student attitude scale (at the individual level of analysis) or the Attitudes/Behavior Scale (at the school level) in a multiple regression analysis.

If schools were to no degree arbitrary, then a regression equation would show the school characteristic having no independent effect, all the variance in suspension being explained by student attitudes and behavior. At least this would be the case if our attitude and attitudes/behavior scales were perfect measures of student propensity to cause trouble at school. Of course they are not, which means that a school characteristic may appear to be related to suspension after controlling on student attitudes and behavior only because the school characteristic is related to student personnel characteristics we did not record. For this reason our analysis must proceed painstakingly slowly. We must consider not whether a school factor is related to suspension, but the strength of the relationship. From what we know about the correlation of the school characteristics with both suspension rates and the attitudes/behavior scale, how likely is it that a better measurement of student propensity to cause trouble would wash out the effect of the school characteristic? This is one type of argument we must consider at every step.

A second type of argument is the possibility that the school characteristic is not a cause of suspension, but is in fact caused by suspensions. (The number of suspension notices mailed to parents will predict perfectly the number of suspensions; but the notices do not cause the suspensions to happen.) In general, if a is correlated with s (a in this case being a school characteristic and s the probability of suspension for an individual or a rate of suspension for an entire school) there are exactly 3 possibilities: a is a cause of s; s is a cause of a; or they are both caused by a third factor, b. (In our case, b is usually the misbehavior of the student or the average misbehavior of the school student body, and is imperfectly measured by the student attitude and attitudes/behavior scales). Our analysis will always take the form of regressing s on b and a simultaneously and analyzing the result to see if the hypothesis that a causes s is reasonable. To further illustrate this point, we conduct one such multiple regression analysis, using individual students' suspension experience as the dependent variable and their antisocial attitude index score and their schools' suspension rates as the two predictors while controlling for the duration of their attendance at the school. The school suspension rate for a student is measured here by the proportion of students who have been suspended from his school before, among all his fellow students at the school but excluding the student himself. This multiple regression analysis is again carried out separately for each of the major grades in both junior and senior high schools in all types of communities. The results are reported in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 demonstrates that in a majority of cases the proportion of other students having suspension experience is as strong a factor as a student's own antisocial attitudes in explaining whether or not he or she has actually been suspended. In fact, as we compare the partial regression coefficients of the student's own antisocial attitudes (the ASAI: column) and of the proportion of other students with suspension experience (the SSRO: column) we notice that the proportion of other students with suspension experience is as strong or a stronger predictor than the student's antisocial attitudes in 13 of the total of 21 subsets of analysis.

What this means is that we can predict with some accuracy whether students will be suspended by their attitudes about cheating, skipping school, robbing stores or other students, and so forth. However, we can predict better whether a student will be suspended by knowing nothing at all about the student and knowing only how frequently other students in his or her school have been suspended. This implies that schools differ considerably in their suspension policies and practices--that a student with a particular set of attitudes would be suspended in a school which suspends a large number of students and not suspended in a school which uses suspension less frequently. In short, whether a student is suspended or not is as much a matter of the school's policy and practices as it is a matter of the student's behavior. The results reported in Table 3.3 actually suggest that if students are interested in reducing the chances of being suspended, they will be better off by transferring to a school with a lower suspension rate rather than by improving their attitudes or reducing their misbehavior. To the extent that this is true, one cannot simply focus on the improvement or the alteration of students' behavior as the sole means of reducing suspension, if such reduction is the goal of society. Instead, greater attention must be directed toward the policies and the practices by which schools respond or react to the misbehavior of students.

In summary, we have found that students' antisocial attitudes and misbehavior do explain suspension. Since the probability of a student being suspended is determined by his behavior, schools must not be considered as totally arbitrary in their administration of suspension. They are not arbitrary in the sense that the student's behavior is unimportant in the school authority's decision to suspend students. Those students who are likely to misbehave or those who are likely to misbehave more frequently do find themselves more likely to be suspended by their schools. On the other hand, we find suspension to be more often an outcome of the liberal use of suspension than an outcome of student misbehavior. That suspension is a school phenomenon rather than an individual one is reflected by the fact that given a student's behavior, his probability of experiencing suspension is greatly increased if one goes to a school where more students have been suspended. Beginning with the next chapter we discuss some of the important factors that contribute to student suspension, aside from student behavior.

Table 3.1 THE EFFECT OF ANTISOCIAL ATTITUDES: Correlation coefficients between students' suspension experience and their Antisocial Attitude Index score, by grade level, school location and school level. *

Grade level	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th	.13 (2059)		.15 (2904)		.13 (1770)	
8th	.17 (2142)		.21 (2805)		.19 (1737)	
9th	.17 (1217)	.18 (634)	.23 (1021)	.23 (1081)	.16 (530)	.13 (789)
10th		.16 (1632)		.19 (1671)		.17 (972)
11th		.15 (1302)		.15 (1574)		.17 (1015)
12th		.18 (1108)		.20 (1272)		.18 (826)
All	.16 (5490)	.17 (4773)	.20 (6771)	.19 (5813)	.17 (4121)	.16 (4135)

* Numbers in parentheses are the total number of students on which correlation coefficients are based. These are all Pearson zero-order correlation coefficients.

Table 3.2 THE EFFECT OF STUDENT ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR: Standardized regression coefficient for six subsets of schools, with school suspension rate[+] as the dependent variable and school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score as the independent variable.

	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale	-.51***	-.30**	-.55***	-.54***	-.48***	-.30**
R^2	.26***	.09**	.30***	.29***	.23***	.09**
Number of schools	(104)	(103)	(121)	(118)	(76)	(82)

[+] The dependent variable, school suspension rate, is measured by the percentage of the students in a school who have been suspended at least once from the school.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 3.3 THE EFFECT OF THE SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATE AND STUDENT ANTISOCIAL ATTITUDES: Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable+, and duration of school attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and school suspension rate as the independent variables.

School location and level	Grade level	Independent Variables++ DOA	ASAI	SSRO	Number of Students	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08***	.12***	.22***	2059	.07***
	8th	.07***	.14***	.30***	2142	.12***
	9th	.13***	.17***	.15***	1217	.07***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.02	.18***	.18***	634	.07***
	10th	.07*	.14***	.21***	1632	.08***
	11th	.06*	.13***	.22***	1302	.07***
	12th	.04	.16***	.31***	1108	.13***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.14***	.16***	2904	.05***
	8th	.03	.20***	.19***	2805	.08***
	9th	.03	.23***	.19***	1021	.09***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.01	.22***	.16***	1081	.08***
	10th	.07**	.18***	.18***	1671	.08***
	11th	.03	.15***	.21***	1574	.07***
	12th	.01	.19***	.14***	1272	.06***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.11***	.22***	1770	.06***
	8th	.01	.19***	.19***	1737	.07***
	9th	.04	.16***	.26***	530	.09***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.00	.12***	.21***	789	.06***
	10th	.01	.18***	.11***	972	.04***
	11th	.01	.17***	.12***	1015	.04***
	12th	.03	.19***	.13***	826	.05***

+ Student's suspension experience is measured thus: 1=having been suspended from the current school; 0=otherwise.

++ The symbols of the independent variables are: 1) DOA=duration of attendance 2) ASAI=the score of Antisocial Attitude Index and 3) SSRO=the school suspension rate for each student, as measured by the proportion of other students who have been suspended from the same school.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

CHAPTER IV

TEACHER JUDGMENTS AND ATTITUDES AND STUDENT SUSPENSIONS

In the previous chapter we discussed the fact that student antisocial attitudes and misbehavior are not the only factors that lead to suspension. The next question we will ask is whether the teacher's judgments or attitudes contribute to student suspension. One of the ways in which teachers may influence suspension is through their personal contact with, and interest in, students. If teachers are personally interested in students and have close personal contact with them, it would seem reasonable to expect that the teachers will be more likely to have favorable perceptions of their students; consequently they should be less likely to impose or advocate severe and damaging sanctions when confronted with student misbehavior, or at least occasional misbehavior. In this kind of environment, we may well expect less suspension. In other words, personal interest by the teachers in students and personal contact between teachers and students could create or facilitate the development of a favorable "bias" or expectation that may decrease the probability of students being suspended from school, should they misbehave. Of course, it is highly probable that teachers' interest in, and personal contact with, students may also directly reduce students' misbehavior and antisocial attitudes, as was found in the Safe School Study. Students would therefore benefit from the additional decrease in the probability of suspension because of improved behavior due to teachers' personal interest and contact. However, our question here is simply whether students benefit from teachers' favorable bias or expectation.

If teachers' judgments do not play a role in student suspension, then we would expect that the extent of student suspension would not be affected by the extent of their personal interest in students. In other words, teachers' interest in students would not decrease the rate of student suspension, and conversely the lack of such interest would not increase students' chances of suspension. This possibility is examined in Table 4.1. Here the percentage of students who believe that their teachers are not interested in them is used as the indicator of the teachers' lack of personal interest in their students. Lack of interest among teachers does appear to be positively correlated with student suspension. The bottom line of Table 4.1 shows that the schools where more students report that their teachers are not interested in them have more students with actual suspension experience. The results of the multiple regression analysis show on the second line of Table 4.1 that with student attitudes/behavior held constant, the schools where teachers are less personally interested in students suspend more of their students. This holds true among all subsets of schools except the urban junior high schools. However, student attitudes/behavior is a more powerful predictor of suspension in each type of school.

This finding is a subject to two interpretations: On the one hand, it could simply mean that schools with high suspension rates have students who are hostile to the school, and will blame the school personnel at any opportunity. Thus, the fact that the students say that the teachers are not interested does not really tell us anything about the faculty. Alternatively, we can hypothesize that the students are making a reasonably accurate judgment

about the teachers in the school. We believe this latter interpretation is more plausible, especially when we bear in mind that the data used here are the responses of all students, not merely the suspended minority. In schools with high suspension rates, a larger fraction of the entire student body sees the teachers as uninterested. This interpretation means that uninterested teachers have an impact on student suspension. It implies that some students would not have been suspended if teachers had a greater interest in them personally.

This line of reasoning is further supported by the individual level analysis. Table 4.2 shows that an individual student's experience of suspension is indeed positively correlated with the proportion of students in his school who say the teachers are not interested in students in general. This means that an individual student with suspension experience, as compared to one who has not been suspended, is more likely to have attended a school where more students say their teachers are not interested. In other words, suspended students are more likely to have an uninterested faculty.

As always, we have three possible explanations. It does not seem possible that the suspension of one student would change the entire student body's assessment of all their teachers. The relationship could be spurious; badly behaved students are more likely to be suspended and more likely to attend schools in low-income neighborhoods with other badly behaved students who would complain a lot about their teachers. The problem with this explanation is that even in the "toughest" schools, the trouble makers are a minority only, and the reports that teachers appear uninterested come from the entire student body.

The more reasonable interpretation seems to be that the teachers' lack of interest increases an individual student's chances of receiving a suspension. Thus, when more students say their teachers are not interested, more students are likely to experience suspension and the probability of experiencing suspension for any single sutdent goes up. In Table 4.3 we test to see if the relationship is spurious by using the student antisocial attitude score along with the percentage of his peers in the school who say teachers are not interested to predict for that student his chances of suspension. The results show that with a student's antisocial attitudes and duration of attendance held constant, the probability of suspension is greater if he goes to a school where more students say their teachers are not interested. This is reflected by the positive partial regression coefficients of the percentage of students who say their teachers are not interested in seventeen of the twenty-one subsets of the analysis*. However, in no case is the teacher's interest as strong a predictor as the student's antisocial attitude index.

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* All four negative partial regression coefficients of teachers being not interested in students are statistically non-significant at .05 level. Of the seventeen positive regression coefficients, nine are significant at or above .05 level, the other eight are not. Considered together, the partial regression coefficients are not significant in urban junior high schools and in rural senior high schools; they are significant in the four other subsets of schools.

Students' chances of being suspended are not only affected by their teachers' interest in them personally, they are also affected by the ways in which teachers perceive them. One type of teacher perception appears to be particularly relevant to student suspension; that is, whether the teacher perceives students as capable of solving their problem through logical reasoning. In the questionnaire presented to the teachers in the Safe School Study survey, each was asked to indicate his or her personal opinion about the following statement: "Pupils are usually not capable of solving their problems through logical reasoning." Answer categories were "strongly disagree" "disagree", "undecided", "agree", or "strongly agree". On the average, one-fifth to one-third of the teachers in a school either agreed or strongly agreed, depending on the level and location of the school: More junior high school teachers than senior high school teachers thought their students were incapable of solving problems and more urban teachers thought so than their suburban or rural counterparts.

Regardless of school level and location, however, we find in all the six subsets of schools that the school suspension rate is positively correlated with the percentage of teachers in a school who agree or strongly agree that pupils are usually incapable of solving their problems (see Table 4.4 bottom row). One interpretation of this positive correlation could be that when a school has a very high suspension rate, its teachers might become increasingly defensive in their response to the potential criticisms of such a high rate of removing students from school; therefore, they develop a view which asserts that students are usually incompetent at solving their own problems in order to justify the high suspension rate. Such an interpretation hinges upon a process of rationalization on the part of the teachers. In general, however, teachers are not directly responsible for deciding whether a misbehaving student is to be suspended or otherwise punished; thus, the rationalization process does not seem to be an adequate explanation.

A more probable explanation, we think, is that when many teachers in a school believe that students are incompetent to solve their problems, they indirectly promote, perpetuate, or at least, facilitate the development of a climate among themselves and their colleagues that favors suspension as a solution to student misbehavior. In other words, it is the belief of student incompetence among teachers that causes a high suspension rate, and not the other way around. If competence at solving problems is taken by the school to be the exception among students rather than the general rule, then it should be quite natural to believe that students with problems at school are so incompetent that the school has no choice but to remove them from the school. Thus the belief of student incompetence in problem solving would increase suspension: when more teachers see students as incapable of solving problems, more students in the school are likely to be suspended.

Although we believe that it is teachers' perception of student incompetence which causes suspension and not vice versa, we need to consider still another possibility--there may not be a true and direct relationship between teachers' belief and student suspension at all. The positive correlation between teachers' belief of student incompetence and suspension rates could be due to their being both caused by a hostile and misbehaving student body. To check this possibility, we regress the suspension rate on the attitudes/ behavior of the student body and on the percentage of teachers with the belief of student incompetence, simultaneously. Since teachers' interest in

students has been found to be a contributing factor in suspensions, we will also enter this factor into the regression equation. The results of this multiple regression analysis (Table 4.4) show that although there is a general reduction in the association between teachers' belief of student incompetence and suspension rate when we control on student body's attitudes and behavior, the partial regression coefficient of teachers' believing student incompetence is still considerable. This means that although it is partially true that when students are more antisocial and more frequently misbehaving, the teachers are more likely to think of students as incompetent (or vice versa*), the belief of student incompetence in itself still has a direct contribution to the increase of suspension rate.

This in turn means that, given student attitudes/behavior and the amount of interest that teachers have in the students, some of the suspensions we observed are a result of teachers' perception of students' inability to solve problems. This finding generally holds, with the exception of the rural junior high schools; among them we do not find such perception to increase the extent of suspension when student behavior and teachers interest are considered. With respect to the role of teachers' perception in suspension, however, we must point out that we are not stating here that students are suspended because of being incapable of solving their problems. What we are saying is that, when teachers think students are incapable of solving problems, they are likely to be less patient or less tolerant when students misbehave. The impatience and intolerance of the teachers could therefore promote a school climate less constrained against suspending students. There may be other reasons why teachers' perception of students as incapable works to increase student suspension. What is important to note here is that such perception does appear to increase suspension. Based on the results presented in Table 4.4, it is highly probable that student suspension rates would decrease if this kind of perception among teachers were reduced.

The important role in student suspension played by teachers' perception, regarding student capability of solving their problems, can also be demonstrated at the individual level. In Table 4.5 we notice that individual students' experience with suspension is positively correlated with the percentage of teachers in their school who agree that pupils are generally incapable of solving problems. This holds true in all the 21 subsets of analysis. When we regress individual students' suspension experience on their antisocial

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* The reversed relationship is possible in this case because we may reasonably expect that the belief in student incompetence, if communicated to or detected by the students, may antagonize the students and therefore heighten their misbehavior as an expression of resentment and protest. In this interpretation, teachers' believing in student incompetence has both a direct effect and an indirect effect on suspension by further heightening the amount of student misbehavior in school.

scores and their teachers' perception of the school's students, we notice in Table 4.6 that for a student, given his or her antisocial attitudes or behavior, the probability of receiving suspension increases if he or she goes to a school with more teachers perceiving students as incapable of solving problems. This again holds true in all the 21 subsets of analysis. The importance of such a perception is thus unmistakably clear.

Given the fact that teachers' interest in students decreases the probability of experiencing suspension by students, and that teachers' perception of students as incapable of solving problems has an opposite effect, the subjective judgments and attitudes of the teachers thus appear to be highly relevant to student suspension. To the extent that teacher judgments, attitudes, or perceptions also determine whether students are suspended, teachers must be considered a valid alternative policy target in any attempt to reduce suspensions. One must no longer insist that the only means through which suspensions could be reduced is to alter students' behavior and attitudes. Our findings in this chapter strongly suggest that a substantial reduction of suspension could be acheived through elimination of apathy and indifference among teachers and through cultivation of better images of students by teachers.

Table 4.1 STUDENTS SAYING TEACHERS DISINTERESTED: Standardized regression coefficients for six subsets of schools, with school suspension rate + as the dependent variable and school's Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score and the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested as the independent variables

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score (SABS)	-.52***	-.26**	-.45***	-.52***	-.41***	-.29*
Percent of students saying teachers are not interested in them (TNI)	-.04	.15	.27***	.14	.21	.03
Multiple R^2	.26***	.11**	.37***	.31***	.27***	.09*
N of schools	(104)	(103)	(121)	(118)	(76)	(82)
Pearson r between school suspension rate (SSR) and TNI	.10	.21	.43	.19	.35	.11

+ School suspension rate is measured by the percentage of the studetns in that school who have ever been suspended from the school as reported by the students themselves.

* P< .05

** P< .01

*** P< .001

Table 4.2 Correlation coefficients between individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS_{ij})* and the percentage of the students in the school considering their teachers as not interested in students , by major grade level, and by school location and school level.**

Major grade level	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th	.02 (2059)		.08 (2904)		.04 (1770)	
8th	.02 (2124)		.11 (2805)		.10 (1737)	
9th	.05 (1217)	.01 (634)	.13 (1021)	.19 (1081)	.12 (530)	.00 (789)
10th		.08 (1632)		.10 (1671)		.01 (972)
11th		.01 (1302)		.05 (1574)		.02 (1015)
12th		.10 (1108)		-.02 (1272)		.01 (826)

* A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

** The number in the parentheses is the number of students on which the Pearson zero-order correlation coefficient is based.

Table 4.3 TEACHER DISINTEREST AND STUDENT ANTISOCIAL ATTITUDES: Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students, with individual student's suspension experience in a school+ as the dependent variable and duration of attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and the percentage of students in the school considering their teachers as not interested in students as the independent variables.

School location and level	Grade level	Independent variables++ DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	TNI_{ji}	N of students	Multiple R
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.13***	.02	2059	.02***
	8th	.06**	.17***	.02	2142	.03***
	9th	.13***	.17***	.04	1217	.05***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.03	.18***	.00	634	.04***
	10th	.09***	.14***	.07*	1632	.04***
	11th	.08**	.14***	-.01	1302	.03***
	12th	.08*	.18***	.08**	1108	.05***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.05*	.14***	.08***	2904	.03***
	8th	.02	.21***	.10***	2805	.05***
	9th	.02	.23***	.13***	1021	.07***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.00	.23***	.08**	1081	.06***
	10th	.08**	.19***	.07**	1671	.05***
	11th	.04	.15***	.04	1574	.03***
	12th	.01	.20***	-.02	1272	.04***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.12***	.03	1770	.02***
	8th	-.02	.19***	.08***	1737	.05***
	9th	.01	.15***	.10*	530	.04***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.03	.13***	.01	789	.02*
	10th	-.00	.17***	-.01	972	.03***
	11th	.00	.17***	.01	1015	.03***
	12th	.04	.18***	-.00	826	.04***

+ An individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS_i) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=Otherwise.

++ The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$ the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student i, and 3) TNI_{ji} =the percentage of students in the student's current school j considering their teachers as not interested in students.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 4.4 EFFECTS OF TEACHERS SAYING STUDENTS INCAPABLE: Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate as the dependent variable[+] and school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score, the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested in students, and the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems as the independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Students Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$)	-.39***	-.20	-.40***	-.45***	-.43***	-.26*
% of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI_j)	-.08	.16	.24**	.12	.22*	.03
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$)	.34***	.11	.18*	.19*	-.08	.21
Multiple R^2	.36***	.12**	.39***	.34***	.28***	.13*
N of schools	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson r between School suspension rate (SSR) and SISP	.49	.23	.38	.37	.05	.25

[+] School suspension rate for a school (SSR_j) is measured by the percentage of the students in that school who have been suspended from the school as reported by the students themselves.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 4.5 Correlation coefficients between individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS_{ij})* and the percentage of the teachers in the school considering students as incapable of solving problems, by major grade level, and by school location and school level.**

Major grade level	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th	.17 (2059)		.10 (2904)		.04 (1770)	
8th	.15 (2142)		.09 (2845)		.04 (1737)	
9th	.12 (1217)	.10 (634)	.05 (1021)	.08 (1081)	.15 (530)	.09 (789)
10th		.05 (1632)		.07 (1671)		.07 (932)
11th		.04 (1302)		.15 (1574)		.03 (1015)
12th		.10 (1108)		.10 (1272)		.02 (826)

* A student's suspension experience in a school (SUS) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

** The number in the parentheses is the total number of students on which the Pearson zero-order correlation coefficient is based.

Table 4.6 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience (SUS)+ as the dependent variable and duration of attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems as the independent variables.

School location and level	Grade level	Independent Variables++ DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	$SISP_{ij}$	N of student	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08***	.12***	.17***	2059	.05***
	8th	.07**	.16***	.15***	2142	.05***
	9th	.15***	.17***	.14***	1217	.07***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.02	.17***	.07	634	.04***
	10th	.19***	.15***	.03	1632	.04***
	11th	.08**	.14***	.01	1302	.03***
	12th	.07*	.18***	.09**	1108	.05***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.05*	.14***	.09***	2904	.04***
	8th	.02	.21***	.09***	2805	.05***
	9th	.02	.23***	.05	1021	.06***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.00	.23***	.07*	1081	.06***
	10th	.08***	.19***	.07**	1671	.05***
	11th	.04	.14***	.14***	1574	.05***
	12th	.01	.20***	.10***	1272	.05***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.13***	.04	1770	.02***
	8th	-.03	.19***	.04	1737	.04***
	9th	.00	.16***	.15**	530	.05***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.01	.13***	.09*	789	.02***
	10th	-.00	.17***	.07*	972	.03***
	11th	.01	.17***	.03	1015	.03***
	12th	.05	.19***	.04	826	.04***

+An individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

++The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA=the duration of attendance for the student, 2) ASAI=the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student, 3) SISP=the percentage of the teachers in student's school considering students as incapable of solving problems.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

CHAPTER V

AUTHORITY STRUCTURE AND DISCIPLINE ADMINISTRATION

Previously we have stated that suspension appears to be very much the product of a school's disciplinary policy and practices. This relationship will be further examined in this chapter. If student suspension is a product of school disciplinary policy and practices, then the way in which a school organizes and operates its disciplinary activities could have some impact on its suspension rate. In particular, how the school controls or governs its students and how it reaches disciplinary decisions concerning student misconduct may have direct bearing on student chances of being suspended. If student suspension is found to be related to any characteristics of the way schools govern students and decide student disciplinary matters, this would suggest that suspension may be indeed a problem of school management, and not merely a problem of student misconduct. We then can be reasonably sure that certain changes in student governance and disciplinary decision patterns and styles can have a beneficial impact in reducing student suspension. The organizational structure through which disciplinary matters are handled and decided and the quality of student governance that the schools institute are thus two important areas of inquiry in this chapter.

Administrative centralization and student suspensions

A fundamental way of observing the differences in organizational structure among schools is to examine how decision-making power or authority is distributed among school personnel. With respect to student disciplinary matters, in general, schools differ in the degree to which discretionary power is given to teachers regarding disciplinary matters. In some schools, disciplinary matters are handled strictly according to the provision of administrative rules; thus the school administration has centralized control over such matters. In contrast, other schools give individual teachers greater discretionary power; in such cases, authority over student discipline is more diffused or decentralized. Does administrative centralization or decentralization make any difference in student suspensions?

In the national survey, each teacher was asked to indicate how his/her school deals with serious student behavior problems such as fighting, disobedience, etc. There are four possible answers: A teacher may indicate that such problems are handled (1) by specific administrative rule, (2) by a general policy interpreted by teacher, or (3) by each individual teacher setting his own policy, or he/she may indicate that (4) it is impossible to say.

Here we use the percentage of teachers in a school who state that serious student behavior problems are dealt with by specific administrative rules as

the indicator of the degree to which disciplinary matters in that school are centralized and controlled by the administration. This indicator of centralized administrative control over student discipline correlated positively with the percentage of students who have been suspended (see Table 5.1). In other words, our data show that more students have been suspended in schools where the degree of administrative centralization in disciplinary matters is higher. This positive correlation is observed in all six subsets of schools. In a causal sense, this would mean that a high degree of administrative centralization or administrative control in student discipline leads to more suspension among students.

In making a causal interpretation, however, we must notice that there are two other alternative interpretations: On the one hand, it is possible that when students' misbehavior is common, teachers may be more likely to state that student disciplinary matters are under the control of the school administration. This is possible because where there are frequent suspensions, the teachers could wish to feel that they were not responsible for the school's discipline problems. If discipline is within the realm of administrative control, then they are not to be blamed for either students' misconduct or for their suspensions. This alternative interpretation would challenge the accuracy of using the percentage of teachers indicating that student behavior problems are handled by specific administrative rules as a measure of administrative centralization. Instead, it would be considered to be a measure of teachers' tendency to avoid blame when misbehavior is a serious problem at school. On the other hand, it is also possible that administrative centralization itself could be a product or a consequence of student misbehavior: when confronted with frequent student misbehavior, a school may be increasingly forced to adapt a centralized administrative structure in order to achieve a higher degree of efficiency in coping with the problems. This second alternative interpretation would suggest that there is no true relationship between administrative centralization and student suspension; the correlation we have observed between them could well be explained by their common antecedent, namely frequent student misconduct.

To take these two alternative interpretations into consideration, we further regress the percentage of students with suspension experience on the percentage of teachers who consider disciplinary matters to be handled largely by administrative rules, while the effects of student attitudes/behavior and other factors are held constant. These other factors are the main aspects of teacher judgments and attitudes considered in the last chapter. The results displayed in Table 5.1 indicate that the partial regression coefficients of administrative centralization are only slightly reduced from their correlations with the student suspension rate after taking into account that three other variables included in this analysis. This means that even if we allow for the two alternative interpretations stated above, the administratively centralized schools still suspend more students. Furthermore, when we compare the multiple R^2s in Table 4.4 to those in Table 5.1, we notice that the R^2s in the latter table are somewhat larger. Such increases are simply attributable to the adding of administrative centralization to the multiple regression equation. This in turn means that by knowing the degree of administrative centralization in a school, we are able to predict the suspension rate of that school more accurately than without knowing it.

It is therefore clear that administrative centralization in the organizational structure concerning student disciplinary matters does have an additional impact on increasing students' chances of receiving suspensions. For example, our data show that for urban senior high schools, with student attitudes/behavior held constant, if a school increases administrative centralization by one standard deviation (or 17% more teachers say that student behavior problems are handled by specific administrative rules), the student suspension rate is likely to go up by .418 standard deviation (or about 5% more students will have suspension experience). The positive impact of administrative centralization on suspensions is, in fact, observed in all six subsets of schools.

We may further note that the importance of administrative centralization is even more apparent in the senior high schools. In two of the three subsets of senior high schools, namely the urban senior high schools and those in mostly rural areas, the degree of administrative centralization appears to be the single most powerful predictor of student suspension, more powerful than students' attitudes/behavior. In the suburban schools and rural junior high schools, however, student attitudes/behavior is the most powerful predictor of student suspension, but degree of centralization is still relatively strong. Thus the empirical evidence strongly support the hypothesis that centralized administrative control of disciplinary matters leads to more suspension.

The impact of centralization on student suspension can also be demonstrated on the individual level. Table 5.2 shows that an individual student's being suspended from school is positively correlated with the percentage of the teachers who state that student behavior problems are determined by administrative rules. The positive correlation is observed in 20 of the 21 subsets of students. In Table 5.3, we regress the individual student's experience with suspension on his antisocial attitudes and on the indicator of administrative centralization jointly. The results show that, with a student's antisocial attitudes held constant, a student has a greater probability of experiencing suspension if he goes to a school with a higher degree of centralized administrative control in disciplinary matters, as reflected by a larger percentage of its teachers' saying that serious student behavior problems are handled by administrative rules. This holds true generally for all the 21 subgroups of students in our analysis. In almsot all these cases, however, rule centralization is a less powerful predictor of suspension than antisocial attitudes.

The empirical evidence presented above thus leaves little doubt about the importance of administrative structure in student suspension. As a school increases its administrative control over disciplinary matters, more students can expect to be suspended. Why is this the case? This question cannot be readily answered here. One probable explanation is that if the school's administration takes responsibility for school discipline, it must suspend students frequently because it has fewer alternative forms of discipline at its disposal. A teacher, on the other hand, has alternatives such as assigning extra work, or simply lecturing the student, which would not be as effective if done by an administrator with whom the student has no ongoing relationship. Another plausible explanation is that following strictly the administrative rules tends to make suspension a routine operation, as routine as any other disciplinary procedure. In this kind of situation, school administrators

who impose suspension on students are less likely to personally sense the serious consequences of their action to the students, therefore, they may be less reluctant to use suspensions as a means of discipline.

On the other hand, since suspension is a routine operation, students facing disciplinary action are also less likely to be given detailed and careful personal consideration. For instance, students who engage in fights with other students may have done so because they are troubled by some serious family problems which makes them preoccupied and less patient with peers. Had the school considered this, their chances of getting suspended would have been reduced. Conceivably, when suspension becomes routine, personal considerations are less likely to enter the disciplinary process. This could therefore further increase students' chances of being suspended. It may be also true that the school administrators in general have less direct contact with or less detailed knowledge of the students, as compared to teachers. This again would imply that other things being equal, students are more likely to be suspended by a school system where school administrators alone decide the disciplinary outcomes than by a system in which teachers have the deciding edge, or play a major role in disciplinary matters.

Whatever the reason, our data show centralized administrative control over disciplinary matters increases student suspension. On the basis of the empirical evidence presented here, suspension could be reduced by recommending that teachers play a greater role in student disciplinary matters. Greater participation by teachers, and greater discretion provided to them, could bring about a substantial reduction in student suspension. A recent trend in the nation's schools seems to emphasize the separation of teaching from discipline; our data suggest indirectly that such a trend may result in increasing numbers of suspensions among students.

Student governance and student suspensions

We have just shown that the school's organizational structure indeed affects students' chances of receiving suspensions. The fact that a more administratively centralized school produces more suspensions among students than a less centralized one seems to support the hypothesis that suspension is not merely a problem of student misconduct but is also a product of the school itself. In this section we will investigate the further question of whether suspension is related to the quality of student governance which a school is able to institute and maintain.

In the Safe School Study, it was found that firm, fair, and consistent discipline were the basic qualities characterizing good student governance in a school. In a typical well governed school the rules are strictly enforced, classroom order is closely maintained, the principal is seen as firm, and both the rules and the enforcement of them are perceived as fair. In the Safe School Study report it was pointed out that this kind of student governance tended to reduce student violence and vandalism in the school. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that fair, firm, and consistent governance should also reduce the need for using suspensions.

To examine whether this is true, here we combine the following nine variables to construct the good governance scale which was the backbone of

the requirement for fair, firm, and consistent discipline in the Safe School Study Report:

1) The percentage of students who report that the school rules are almost never strictly enforced

2) The percentage of students who report that the teachers at their school almost never keep order in class

3) The percentage of teachers who report that the teachers always maintain order in class

4) The percentage of students who disagree that their principal runs the school with a firm hand

5) The percentage of the students who believe that the school rules are almost never fair

6) The percentage of the students who believe that it is almost never true that in their school, the punishment for breaking the school rules is the same no matter who you are

7) The percentage of the students who believe that the teachers in their school are almost never fair

8) The percentage of the students who disagree with the statement that the "principal is fair"

9) The percentage of teachers who believe that "all students are treated equally" very much describes their school

Among these nine variables, (3) and (9) are positive indicators of good governance; the other seven are considered negative indicators.

We may also note that the first four variables measure the firmness and consistency dimensions, the other five measures the fairness dimension. The score on the scale is the weighted linear combination of these nine variables with the weights being derived from a principal components factor analysis of intercorrelations among these variables (See Table A5.1)*.

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* In operation, the first four variables and last five are separately scaled first. Two subscales so derived are then scaled together. The two-staged scaling procedure was employed for reasons of convenience and conceptual clarity.

A high score on the scale for a school means the school is able to govern its students well and its governance is generally perceived as fair. As we relate the good governance score to the percentage of students with suspension experience, we find that good governance and suspensions are correlated negatively in all six of the subsets of schools in our analysis (See Table 5.4). This means that the well-governed schools in fact rely less on suspension. In view of this, suspension cannot be considered essential to student governance for the schools. Nor can it be considered an element of a good governance policy.

One may argue however, that governance, good or bad, is a function of student behavior; thus an alternative interpretation of the negative correlations between suspension and good governance is that the schools with better student governance are simply schools where students behave better. With better student behavior, the schools therefore have fewer suspensions, because they have less need for them. To examine this alternative explanation, in Table 5.4 we further regress student suspension on good governance while holding constant the effects of student behavior and all other factors considered to this point. The results show that even with student behavior taken into consideration, the better governed schools still appear to have suspended fewer of their students.

The regression coefficients for the governance scales are smaller than the correlation coefficients of governance with suspension when student attitudes/behavior is not controlled. This means that in part, a high governance score may be attributed to better student behavior. But the regression coefficients are not small; one is as high as -.25, and others are also large. This implies that the governance scale is not merely a measure of student behavior, and that good governance practice does lower the suspension rate. The Safe School Study report also concluded that schools which received high scores on the governance scale did so not because they had an easier student population to work with; instead, it said that good governance resulted from a discipline policy which reflected the principal's leadership and the degree to which teachers and administrators cooperated in carrying out a discipline policy.

This further strengthens our conclusion above that suspension is not essential to student governance. The partial regression coefficients for good governance suggest that when schools are unable to govern well, they are more likely to use severe and simple means of discipline such as suspension. This is further supported by the analysis conducted at the individual level. Table 5.5 shows that in all 21 subsets individual students' suspension experience is negatively correlated with the degree to which their schools are well governed. In Table 5.6, it is further shown that, holding constant a student's attitudes, his probability of being suspended increases if he goes to a less well governed school.

In summary, the data seem to imply that suspension is not essential to the governance of students. To some degree, the inability of schools to govern students well increases their reliance on suspension. To the extent this is true, this finding and the previous finding of the importance of administrative centralization together clearly spell out that suspension is not simply a matter of student behavior or misbehavior. It is also a product of school discipline policy and practices, as we have stated in Chapter 3.

Our analysis here assures schools that they need not rely on suspensions to achieve good governance in school. Our analyses also show that substantial reduction in suspensions can be achieved by increasing teachers' participation in student disciplinary matters and by deroutinization of the disciplinary process.

Table 5.1 Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate (SSR)[+] as the dependent variable and school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score, the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested, the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems as handled by administrative rule as the four independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score(SABS)	-.43***	-.31**	-.38***	-.42***	-.42***	-.26**
% of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI)	-.07	.19*	.23**	.06	.20	.08
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems (SISP)	.28**	.08	.14	.15*	-.10	.09
% of teachers reporting that student behavior problems as handled by administrative rule (DBAR)	.16	.42***	.21**	.31***	.24*	.52***
Multiple R^2	.38***	.28***	.44***	.43***	.34***	.39***
N of schools	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson r between school suspension rate (SSR) and DBAR	.19	.33	.36	.44	.29	.54

[+] The suspension rate for a school (SSR) is measured by the percentage of the students in that school who have been suspended from the school at least once as reported by the students themselves.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 5.2 Pearson zero-order correlation coefficients between individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS_{ij})* and the percentage of school's teachers reporting student behavior problems as handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$), by major grade level, and by school location and school level.

Major grade level	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th	.03 (2059)		.08 (2904)		.06 (1770)	
8th	.06 (2142)		.11 (2805)		.10 (1737)	
9th	-.00 (1217)	.12 (634)	.04 (1061)	.06 (1081)	.15 (530)	.13 (789)
10th		.08 (1632)		.16 (1671)		.11 (972)
11th		.11 (1302)		.14 (1574)		.13 (1015)
12th		.09 (1108)		.09 (1272)		.10 (826)

* A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

Table 5.3 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable+, and duration of school attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and the percentage of school's teachers reporting student behavioral problems as handled by administrative rules as the independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables++ DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	$DBAR_{ij}$	N of students	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.13***	.03	2059	.02***
	8th	.07**	.16***	.06**	2142	.04***
	9th	.14***	.17***	.03	1217	.05***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.02	.19***	.13***	634	.05***
	10th	.09***	.15***	.08**	1632	.04***
	11th	.09**	.14***	.12***	1302	.04***
	12th	.09**	.18***	.08**	1108	.05***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.14***	.08***	2904	.03***
	8th	.02	.21***	.11***	2805	.06***
	9th	.02	.23***	.04	1021	.06***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.00	.23***	.05	1081	.06***
	10th	.07**	.19***	.15***	1671	.07***
	11th	.02	.15***	.13***	1574	.04***
	12th	-.00	.20***	.08**	1272	.05***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.00	.13***	.07**	1770	.02***
	8th	-.01	.19***	.10***	1737	.05***
	9th	.03	.17***	.17***	530	.05***
Rural senior high schools	9th	.02	.13***	.14***	789	.04***
	10th	.02	.18***	.12***	972	.04***
	11th	.03	.17***	.13***	1015	.05***
	12th	.05	.19***	.12***	826	.05***

+ A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

++ The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=the Antisocial Attitude Index score for for the student i, 3) $DBAR_{ij}$=The percentage of teachers in the school of student i who report that student behavior problems are handled by administrative rules.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 5.4 Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate (SSR_j)* as the dependent variable, and 1) school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$), 2) the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI_j), 3) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$), 4) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$), and 5) school's Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j) as the five independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$)	-.32 **	-.23	-.30 **	-.41 ***	-.51 ***	-.21 *
% of students considering their teachers as not being interested (TNI_j)	-.13	.14	.17	.05	.27 *	.02
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$)	.25**	.03	.15	.15*	-.11	.09
% of teachers reporting that student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$)	.18*	.43***	.22**	.31***	.24*	.55***
Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j)	-.25*	-.19	-.15	-.03	.21	-.14
Multiple R^2	.42***	.30***	.45***	.43***	.36***	.40***
N of schools	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson's r between school suspension rate (SSR_j) and SGS_j	-.44	-.32	-.48	-.32	-.24	-.14

*The suspension rate for a school j (SSR_j) is measured by the percentage of the students in that school who have been suspended from the school at least once as reported by the students themselves. * $P<.05$, ** $P<.01$, *** $P<.001$

Table 5.5 Pearson zero-order correlation coefficients between an individual student's suspension experience in a school (SUS_{ij})* and the school's Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j), by major grade level, and by school location and school level.**

Major grade level	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
7th	-.15 (2041)		-.10 (2904)		-.07 (1770)	
8th	-.16 (2105)		-.11 (2805)		-.06 (1737)	
9th	-.09 (1188)	-.18 (629)	-.18 (1021)	-.09 (1081)	-.11 (530)	-.02 (789)
10th		-.12 (1559)		-.09 (1671)		-.01 (972)
11th		-.05 (1248)		-.13 (1574)		-.04 (1015)
12th		-.11 (1054)		-.06 (1272)		-.00 (826)

* A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

** The number in the parentheses is the total number of students on which the r is calculated.

Table 5.6 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable[+], and duration of school attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and school's Student Governance Scale score as the independent variable.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables[++] DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	SGS_j GOVFair	N of students	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.12***	-.14***	2059	.04***
	8th	.08***	.16***	-.16***	2142	.06***
	9th	.13***	.17***	-.08**	1217	.05***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.02	.16***	-.16***	634	.06***
	10th	.08***	.14***	-.10**	1632	.04***
	11th	.08**	.14***	-.02	1302	.03***
	12th	.06	.18***	-.09**	1108	.05***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.14***	-.09***	2904	.03***
	8th	.01	.20***	-.09***	2805	.05***
	9th	.01	.22***	-.15***	1021	.08***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.22***	-.07*	1081	.06***
	10th	.08**	.19***	-.06*	1671	.05***
	11th	.02	.14***	-.11***	1574	.04***
	12th	-.01	.20***	-.04	1272	.04***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.03	.12***	-.05*	1770	.02***
	8th	-.02	.19***	-.04	1737	.04***
	9th	.00	.16***	-.11*	530	.04***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.03	.13***	-.01	789	.02***
	10th	-.01	.17***	-.00	972	.03***
	11th	-.00	.17***	-.03	1015	.03***
	12th	.04	.19***	.02	826	.04***

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student i, 3) SGS_j=the Student Governance Scale score of the school j.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

CHAPTER VI

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SUSPENSION

Some writers have suggested a possible linkage between academic performance and student suspensions. This possibility can be roughly stated as follows: Most suspended students are academically unable to compete or catch up with other students. Because of their academic difficulties these students become uninterested in school and misbehave more. And because of their misbehavior, they are more likely to be suspended. Thus, if the needs of students with academic difficulties can be taken care of through special arrangements, the amount of misbehavior at school will be decreased. Consequently, not only will these students' chances of getting suspended be reduced, the suspension rates for the school will also be reduced accordingly. However, a greater chance of low-achieving students being suspended could also mean that there is an institutional bias in favor of better academic performance on the part of the schools. In other words, it is possible that, given the same behavior, a low achieving student may have a greater chance of getting suspended then a student with better academic performance. This would mean that schools' emphasis on academic achievement, or academic bias, is a factor in suspension. If academic bias is found to be contributing to student suspension, the policy implication would be that additional reduction of suspension can be achieved by reducing academic bias or by preventing such bias from influencing the disciplinary process.

Does academic bias play a role in student suspensions? As reported at the bottom of Table 6.1, our data show that there is a positive correlation between the student suspension rate in a school and the average percentage of low ability students reported by all the teachers in the school. This positive correlation is observed in all the six subsets of analysis. If we assume that teachers are generally making judgments about student ability, and that such judgments are comparable across schools, then the positive correlation would in fact suggest that low ability students are truly suspended more often than other students. If we take the teachers' report as the true measure of their students' ability, then we should ask why low ability students are more often suspended. There are two possibilities: The low ability students may misbehave more, or they may not misbehave more but are more severely punished for their misbehavior.

To inquire into these possibilities, we further regress the percentage of students with suspension experience in a school on both the student attitudes/behavior and the percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers, and in doing so, we again as before hold constant the impact of other factors which we have discussed up to this point. The results of this analysis is also reported in Table 6.1. There are two important points which we must note particularly about these results: First, with the percentage of low ability students entering the regression equation, there is a drop in the partial regression coefficient of student attitudes/behavior. This can be seen by comparing Tables 6.1 and 5.4. At the same time the reverse is also true: when we control for student attitudes/behavior, there

is a drop from the correlation coefficient between suspension and the percentage of low ability students to the partial regression coefficient of the percentage of low ability students on suspension. Such drops indicate that the low ability students in fact misbehave more. Second, we notice that, even with student attitudes/behavior held constant, there is still a weak positive partial regression coefficient of the percentage of low ability students on suspension rates in all the six subsets of schools. In addition, the inclusion of the percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers does increase the multiple R^2 from those reported in Table 5.4 to those reported in 6.1. This indicates that despite their share of misbehavior, the low ability students are more frequently suspended.

The data thus support both of the two possibilities which we mentioned earlier: the low ability students do misbehave more and therefore they get suspended more, and they also are more severely punished and therefore they get suspended still more often. When low ability students receive suspensions exceeding their share of misbehavior, the additional suspensions must be clearly attributed to academic bias which operates to their disadvantage. With respect to the finding of more misbehavior among low ability students and consequently more suspensions for them, we must ask why the low ability students should misbehave more.

It does not seem necessary that these two be connected. However, one reason may be that conventional schools have been so structured that they favor the high ability students. Students of low ability are left out of activities, receive few of the rewards of the school and are tempted to rebel (McPartland and MacDill, 1976; Stinchcombe, 1964). Thus, the fact that low ability students misbehave more may also itself be in part a reflection of the impact of academic bias. Our data do not permit us to inquire into the actual reward structure in the school, however. But all the evidence above considered together seems to support the hypothesis that academic bias plays a role in student suspensions.

It may be argued that academic bias is inevitable in schools. It may be that the only way for schools to teach students successfully is by giving positive rewards for learning; and of course those who learn more will get more of the rewards. Or it may be impossible to staff a school with teachers who are themselves dedicated academics without them being biased in favor of the better students. These arguments may or may not be true; the fact remains that by the argument advanced here academic bias is harmful to low ability students.

The discussion above is based on the assumption that the percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers truly measures the relative number of students who are indeed low in ability. This assumption need not be the only possibility, however. We could equally reasonably assume that this percentage simply measures the number of students who are merely considered and labelled by the teachers in a school as low in ability rather than the number of students who are low in their true or actual ability. In other words, the criteria of judging students' ability may not always be the same from one school to another. If we accept this alternative

assumption and interpret the percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers as measuring the relative number of students so labelled, would we come to the same conclusion as we have above? The answer is yes, but with one major qualification: Under this alternative assumption and interpretation, the positive regression coefficient of the percentage of low ability students on suspension rate reported in Table 6.1 would mean that the students need not be truly low in their ability; as long as they are considered to have low ability they are more likely to be suspended by the school. This again would suggest the interference of academic bias in student suspension.

Still a third possibility that we may consider is that the percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers in a school may not be a good indicator of the number of students with low ability at all. Instead, it may be considered as a manifestation of academic bias itself. This is possible because wherever academic bias is strong, the teachers may set higher standards and hence tend to consider more of their students low in ability. Thus, a higher average percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers in a school would reflect a stronger degree of academic bias in that school as compared to other schools. This interpretation is to some extent supported by the fact that in general teachers reported a rather high percentage of their students as having ability. In urban junior high schools, for example, teachers consider nearly 40% of their students as low in ability. The smallest percentage is reported among the suburban senior high schools, in which the teachers reported more than 27% of their students as low in ability. Following this interpretation, the results presented in Table 6.1 then are directly indicative of the impact of academic bias on suspension. The table thus implies that academic bias is related to student suspension in all six groups of schools. The stronger the bias is in the schools, the more students are likely to be considered as having low ability and the more vulnerable to being suspended the students become.

In summary, we have discussed three different ways in which the results represented in Table 6.1 could be interpreted. Our data are not subtle enough to separate and test these interpretations, but all three interpretations reach essentially the same conclusion: academic bias plays a role in student suspensions and low ability students are suspended more than expected, given the number of incidents of misbehavior attributed to them.

One explanation for this is perhaps that when students are judged or perceived as having low ability, school authorities may encounter and feel less resistance to suspending them, because they may consider these students to have little chance of achieving and to be more likely to drop out of their own will anyway. In a sense then, they may feel that temporary interruption of schooling for these students is not as consequential or damaging as it is for students who are considered academically more promising.

So far, we have been looking at school level data. The impact of academic bias can also be demonstrated in analyses conducted at the individual level. In Table 6.2 we regress individual students' suspension experience on their antisocial attitude scores and on whether their grades are above average. The grade average is self-reported by the student. The results show that, holding constant a student's antisocial attitudes, his probability of being suspended

is reduced if his grades are above average (B or above). This holds true for all the 21 subgroups of students in our analysis. In Table 6.3, we further regress an individual student's suspension experience on the average percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers at his school, while again we hold the student's antisocial attitudes constant. The percentage of low ability students in his school as reported by his teachers is here treated as a contextual variable to indicate the relative degree of academic bias at his school.

The results indicate that given a student's antisocial attitudes, his probability of being suspended from school increases if he goes to a school where the teachers consider more of the students as low in ability. This means that there are two ways in which we can observe academic bias working against an individual student: (1) If his academic performance is average or below average, his probability of receiving suspension increases, and (2) if his school has a greater emphasis on academic ability, his probability of suspension also increases.

Our data show both of these patterns. In the urban junior high schools, a "C" student is 6% more likely to be suspended than a "B" student, while a student in a school where more teachers say the students are of low ability is 4% more likely to be suspended than a student in a school where teachers do not generally have this impression. We may note that our data do not contain information about the actual behavior of individual students. But by holding constant the degree of antisocial attitude, the fact that a poorer academic record and a higher percentage of low ability students reported by teachers both increase an individual student's chances of receiving suspension still further strengthens our earlier conclusion that academic bias plays a role in student suspensions. This conclusion is thus collaborated by both the school level data and the individual level data.

Based on the empirical evidence that we have presented, the hypothesis that institutional academic bias causes some additional suspensions from school and that such bias discriminates against the students with low ability or who have exhibited lower achievement in their school work, is supported. To the extent that this is true, this suggests that not only can suspensions be somewhat reduced by certain safeguards which prevent the interference of such bias in the disciplinary process, but also that safeguards are necessary in order to provide fair and equal disciplinary measures for the less gifted students.

Table 6.1 Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate (SSR_j)+ as the dependent variable, and 1) school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score ($SASB_j$), 2) the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI_j), 3) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$), 4) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$), 5) school's Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j), and 6) the average percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers (LAS_j) as the six independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/ Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$)	-.29**	-.20	-.30**	-.37***	-.51***	-.21*
% of students considering their teachers as not being interested (TNI_j)	-.12	.14	.16	.05	.29*	.01
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$)	.23*	.02	.11	.11	-.12	.06
% of teachers reporting that student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$)	.18	.43***	.21**	.28***	.24*	.53***
Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j)	-.23*	-.19	-.14	-.04	.22	-.15
Average percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers (LAS_j)	.11	.05	.10	.12	.10	.10
Multiple R^2	.42***	.31***	.45***	.44***	.39***	.41***
N of schools	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson r between school suspensio rate (SSR_j) and LAS_j	.41	.26	.41	.44	.13	.27

+ The suspension rate for a school j (SSR_j) is measured by the percentage of the students in that school who have been suspended from the school at least once as reported by the students themselves. * $P<.05$ ** $P<.01$, *** $P<.001$

Table 6.2 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable[+], and duration of school attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and having an above average GPA as the three independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent Variables[++] DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	GPA_i	N of students	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.07**	.12***	-.10***	2059	.03***
	8th	.06**	.15***	-.10***	2142	.04***
	9th	.14***	.15***	-.16***	1217	.07***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.03	.18***	-.06	634	.04***
	10th	.09***	.12***	-.16***	1632	.06***
	11th	.08**	.11***	-.15***	1302	.05***
	12th	.09**	.16***	-.14***	1108	.06***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.13***	-.09***	2904	.03***
	8th	.01	.19***	-.10***	2805	.06***
	9th	.02	.21***	-.10**	1021	.06***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.00	.21***	-.10**	1081	.06***
	10th	.09***	.15***	-.17***	1671	.07***
	11th	.05	.11***	-.18***	1574	.06***
	12th	-.00	.16***	-.18***	1274	.07***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.12***	-.02	1770	.02***
	8th	-.02	.18***	-.07**	1737	.04***
	9th	-.00	.13**	-.12**	530	.04***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.02	.11**	-.12**	789	.03***
	10th	.01	.15***	-.12***	972	.04***
	11th	.01	.14***	-.11***	1015	.04***
	12th	.04	.15***	-.15***	826	.06***

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student i, 3) GPA_i=The grade point average for the student i as reported by the student, with 1=above average or better (B or above), and 0=otherwise.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 6.3 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable[+], and duration of school attendance, Antisocial Attitude Index score, and the average percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers as the three independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables[++] DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	LAS_j	N of students	Multiple R^2
Urban junior high schools	7th	.07**	.11***	.15***	2059	.04***
	8th	.07**	.16***	.11***	2142	.04***
	9th	.14***	.17***	.11***	1217	.06***
Urban senior high schools	9th	.03	.18***	.03	634	.04***
	10th	.08**	.15***	.10***	1632	.04***
	11th	.08**	.14***	-.01	1302	.03***
	12th	.08*	.18***	.07*	1108	.05***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.03	.14***	.13***	2904	.04***
	8th	.00	.21***	.10***	2805	.05***
	9th	.02	.23***	.02	1021	.06***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.01	.23***	.05	1081	.06***
	10th	.10***	.19***	.10***	1671	.06***
	11th	.06*	.15***	.18***	1574	.06***
	12th	.01	.20***	.10***	1274	.05***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.03	.12***	.08**	1770	.02***
	8th	-.02	.19***	.05*	1737	.04***
	9th	.00	.18***	.17***	530	.05***
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.03	.13***	.04	789	.02***
	10th	-.00	.18***	.05	972	.03***
	11th	-.00	.17***	.07*	1015	.03***
	12th	.03	.20***	.14***	826	.05***

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$ =the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student i, 3) LAS_j=the average percentage of low ability students as reported by the teachers in school j.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 6.4 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience[+] as the dependent variable, and 1) duration of school attendance 2) Antisocial Attitude Index score, 3) the percentage of students considering their teachers as not being interested, 4) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule, 6) school's Student Governance Scale score, and 7) the student's having an above average GPA as the seven independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables[++]							N of students	Multiple R^2
		DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	TNI_j	$SISP_j$	$DBAR_j$	SGS_j	GPA_i		
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.11***	-.06*	.13***	.01	-.11***	-.09***	2059	.07***
	8th	.09***	.13***	-.05	.09***	.04	-.15***	-.09***	2142	.08***
	9th	.15***	.14***	-.02	.14***	-.02	-.06***	-.16***	1217	.10***
Urban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.16***	-.10*	.00	.18***	-.23***	-.04	634	.10***
	10th	.08**	.11***	.05	.00	.08**	-.09**	-.16***	1632	.08***
	11th	.07*	.11***	.01	-.00	.12***	-.05	-.14***	1302	.07***
	12th	.07*	.14***	.08*	.06	.11***	-.04	-.14***	1108	.09***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.12***	.02	.07**	.05*	-.06*	-.08***	2904	.05***
	8th	.03	.19***	.04	.05*	.08***	-.04	-.09***	2805	.07***
	9th	.02	.20***	.05	-.01	.05	-.12**	-.09**	1021	.09***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.20***	.07	.07	-.02	-.03	-.10***	1081	.07***
	10th	.06*	.14***	.03	.02	.13***	-.02	-.16***	1671	.10***
	11th	.00	.10***	-.01	.10***	.09***	-.08**	-.16***	1574	.09***
	12th	-.01	.16***	-.06	.08**	.06*	-.04	-.17***	1274	.08***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.12***	.00	.02	.06*	-.05	-.02	1770	.03***
	8th	-.01	.18***	.08**	.01	.09***	.01	-.07**	1737	.06***
	9th	.05	.14***	.08	.13**	.16***	-.04	-.10*	530	.10***
Rural senior high schools	9th	.03	.11**	-.00	.07	.14***	-.04	-.11**	789	.05***
	10th	.03	.16***	-.01	.04	.11**	-.01	-.11**	972	.06***
	11th	.02	.14***	-.01	-.01	.13***	-.05	-.10**	1015	.06***
	12th	.05	.16***	.01	-.00	.11**	.00	.15***	826	.07***

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$= Antisocial Attitude Index score of the student i, 3) TNI_j=the percentage of students concisdering their teachers in the school j as not being interested, 4) $SISP_j$=the percentage of teachers in school j considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) $DBAR_j$=the percentage of teachers in school j reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule, 6) SGS_j=the Student Governance Scale score for the school j, and 7) GPA_i=the grade point average of the student i as reported by the student; with 1=above average or better (B or better), and 0=otherwise.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

CHAPTER VII

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SUSPENSION

A CENTRAL ISSUE about student suspension is whether there is racial discrimination against minority students in the use of suspensions by schools. The possibility of racial discrimination will be discussed in this chapter. As reported in Chapter 2, empirically we do find more minority students suspended, especially Blacks, and consequently schools with more minority students also have more suspensions. Can the higher suspension rate experienced by the minority students therefore be interpreted as evidence of racial discrimination?

The answer to this question depends on which of two different conceptions of racial discrimination one accepts. The conceptions differ from each other regarding whether student behavior is a relevant consideration. From one perspective, racial discrimination exists if the end results of a disciplinary practice are such that they are favorable to one racial group and unfavorable to another. As long as the end results are unequal, such a practice is discriminatory because the observed inequality in end results is either due to the unequal treatment which students of different races receive for the same behavior, or is due to uniform treatment for different students without making proper allowance for their racial and cultural background. In other words, not only is unequal treatment discriminatory, but the insistence on uniform treatment by consciously or unconsciously disregarding the racial and cultural differences that favor one group and penalize another is also discriminatory. Uniformity in treatment regardless of racial and cultural differences can be discriminatory because it may reflect nothing more than a biased valuation--for example, the fact that some black male students wear hats indoors is sometimes construed as antisocial or disrespectful behavior when it should only be seen as a cultural difference. If one ethnocentrically regards all students wearing hats indoors as being disrespectful of their teachers and then uses an "equal treatment" standard to suspend all these students, the end result will be to suspend more black students.

Fundamentally, in this view, the higher suspension rate of one group may reflect a greater amount of misbehavior in this group, but this itself may be considered indicative of an overall bias in the system which rewards one racial or ethnic group but not another. A school with a very small minority faculty may have a higher suspension rate for minority students because the minority students may have inadequate role models in the school. Again, equal treatment masks a form of racial bias. This means that whether in fact there are behavioral differences between the racial minorities and the majority students is analytically irrelevant. And one would conclude that the higher suspension rate experienced by the minority students as reported in Chapter 2 is therefore sufficient to indicate racial discrimination.

The second conception of racial discrimination, in comparison, considers discrimination only to mean unequal treatment of the same behavior. Under this conception, the possible behavioral differences between minority students

and the white majority become an important element in the assessment of possible racial discrimination in suspensions. For those who accept this view, the higher suspension rate observed among the minority students does not necessarily mean that they are discriminated against because the higher rate could simply be due to more misbehavior among minority students at school. The crucial question then is whether the higher suspension rate among the minority students can be explained by any more frequent misbehavior, or to put it differently, whether the low suspension rate experienced by white students can be explained by any better behavior on their part at school.

To examine whether the different suspension rates experienced by white and nonwhite students can be explained by their behavioral differences, we regress school suspension rate on the percentage of white students, while holding constant student attitudes/behavior and other factors treated earlier. The results in Table 7.1 show that even when we control for attitude/behavior differences, the suspension rate is apparently still higher among nonwhites than whites, since the presence of more nonwhite students tends to increase the overall suspension rate in a school, and schools with more white students tend to have a lower suspension rate. This holds true for all the six subgroups of schools in our analysis, especially for the urban schools.

Since this equation controls on the attitudes/behavior scale, these results suggest that the higher suspension rate experienced by the minorities is not simply a matter of their more frequent misbehavior or antisocial attitudes. The attitudes/behavior scale is not a perfect measure of misbehavior, of course, but entering it in the equation should reduce the importance of race and yet it remains a large and significant factor. To the extent that nonwhite minorities experience more suspensions than white students, after adjusting for their respective share of misbehavior, the additional suspension experienced by the nonwhite student is thus indicative of unequal treatment against them. The higher rate of suspension among the nonwhite minorities is therefore attributable to racial discrimination according to the second conception of racial discrimination discussed above.

Undoubtedly the definition of discrimination varies not only from one person to another; it is also a legal-political matter which changes from time to time. In any event, what is important here is that the white and the nonwhite do appear to be unequally treated. The same apparent inequality in treatment of white and nonwhite students appears in the analysis at the individual level. In Table 7.2, we regress the individual student's suspension experience on his race and antisocial attitudes jointly. The results show that, given a student's antisocial attitudes, the probability of his being suspended from school increases if he is nonwhite, and decreases if he is white. This holds true among all the 21 subgroups of students in our analysis. In Table 7.3, we further introduce the student's academic performance, school governance, and other factors as control variables into the regression equation. The basic finding remains: The probability of suspension is still higher for nonwhites than for whites. With all these results considered together, the data seem to give clear support to the hypothesis that racial bias is a contributing factor in student suspension.

It could be, however, that minority students are more disruptive in school in ways which are not completely revealed by their scores on the attitude or attitude/behavior scales. Such a hypothesis cannot be tested with these data, and hence cannot be disproved. On the whole we do not

think that such a hypothesis could completely explain these findings. If minority students did have high rates of misbehavior, their scores on the attitude scales should also be very high, and controlling on the attitude scale should sharply reduce the impact of race in predicting the probability of suspension. Otherwise, we are left hypothesizing that, for unknown reasons, minority students misbehave a great deal but also do not have antisocial attitudes--a hypothesis which is simply too complicated to be believable. In fact, introducing the attitude scale does not make that much difference. The average correlation of race with suspension across all the subgroups of the population is -.114 for Table 7.2; with the attitudes scale score controlled in Table 7.2, the average standardized regression coefficient for race is -.105, which is not much smaller.

There is one other alternative explanation. One may argue that, in general, the nonwhite students are more likely to come from less afluent families. Thus, in comparison to white students, they may more likely suffer from poverty-related problems, in addition to the achievement level measured earlier, such as possibly being less attentive and less motivated at school, and having less parental attention or guidance at home. Such additional poverty-related problems may eventually increase their chances of being suspended from school. As a result, one could therefore argue that the higher suspension rate for the nonwhite minorities is due to such poverty-related problems rather than to racial bias in school. Is this argument true?

In order to examine whether higher rates of suspension for nonwhites can be explained away by poverty-related problems, we regress school suspension rate on the percentage of white students and the percentage of low economic status students simultaneously. The percentage of low economic status students here is a linear combination of the percentage of students whose parents are unemployed or on welfare as reported by the principal and the percentage of students in the school free lunch program as reported by the students themselves. The results of this multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 7.4. These results show that, even when poverty-related problems are taken into consideration, the nonwhite students still experience more suspension in all subsets except rural senior high schools. The higher suspension rate for the nonwhite students therefore cannot be explained away by their poverty or poverty-related problems.

The hypothesis that the higher suspension rate of nonwhites is a matter of unequal treatment and not simply a matter of poverty is supported even more strongly in the individual level analysis. In Table 7.5, we regress the individual student's suspension experience on the student's race and attitudes, while we hold constant whether he gets free lunch at school and whether his parents talk frequently abolt school. The results indicate that given a student's antisocial attitudes, his probability of being suspended from school increases if he is nonwhite, although having free lunch (or being poor) and having parents who rarely talk about school also increase such probability. This holds true for all the 21 subgroups of students in the analysis.

In summary, our data clearly support the hypothesis that nonwhite and white students are not equally treated. The inequality in treatment exists even when factors such as poverty, behavior/sttitudes, academic performance,

parental attention, attending a centralized school, etc., are considered. To the extent this is true, racial bias plays a role in suspension. Protection against the interference of such bias in suspension proceedings should therefore be treated as a valid policy consideration.

To say racial bias is a contributing factor is not the same as to say that the higher suspension rate of minority students can be reduced by increasing the number of minority teachers in the schools. In Table 7.6 we compare the suspension rate of black students in schools where more than 80% of teachers are white to those in schools in which less than 80% of the teachers are white. For purposes of this comparison, we select only the schools where a substantial number of black students were included in our sample (at least 10 of the 50 sampled), to insure that the black suspension rate could be reasonably calculated. The average black suspension rate for the two groups of schools is reported in Table 7.6. We notice that in urban and rural communities, the suspension rates are essentially no different between those blacks who attend schools with more white teachers and those who attend schools with fewer white teachers. In suburban communities the black students who attend schools with more minority teachers have a higher suspension rate than those who attend schools with more white teachers. This suggests that black students are not necessarily better off with minority teachers than they are with white teachers. This, however, should not be construed as contradicting the hypothesis that racial bias plays a role in suspensions. The comparable suspension rates for white students in the same schools are generally lower than those for black students (see Table 7.6). Since black students are more often suspended regardless of the number of minority teachers, this suggests to us that racial bias may be institutional in nature. It is institutional in the sense that the bias is inherent in at least some of the school systems and is perhaps shared by both white and nonwhite teachers alike. We do not have the data to inquire into the actual racial attitudes of teachers and other school personnel, but the data presented above certainly suggest that the reduction of the high suspension rate among minority students requires fundamental safeguards against institutional bias; simply increasing the number of minority teachers in itself will not bring about more equal treatment for the minority students. The data seem to argue that all school staff must be sensitive and aware of the tendency for minority students to be suspended more easily.

Table 7.1 Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate (SSR_j)+ as the dependent variable, and 1) school's Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$), 2) the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI_j), 3) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$), 4) thepercentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule($DBAR_j$), 5) school's Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j), 6) the average percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers (LAS_j), and 7) the percentage of white students (RW_j) as the seven independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$)	-.16	-.12	-.29**	-.36***	-.47***	-.21*
% of students considering their teachers as not being interested (TNI_j)	-.07	.18	.13	.05	.29*	.01
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$)	.27**	-.04	.12	.11	-.11	.06
% of teachers reporting that student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$)	.16*	.44***	.18*	.28***	.14	.53***
Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j)	-.16	-.22	-.16	-.05	.20	-.15
Average percentage of low ability students reported by teachers (LAS_j)	-.02	-.02	.03	.11	.05	.10
Percentage of white students (RW_j)	-.32**	-.27*	-.17*	-.04	-.19	-.01
Multiple R^2	.47***	.34***	.48***	.44***	.39***	.41***
N of students	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson r between school suspension rate (SSR_j) and RW_j	.54	-.29	-.36	-.33	-.36	-.28

+The suspension rate for a school j (SSR_j) is measured by the percentage of students in that school who have been suspended from the school at least once as reported by the students themselves.

* $P<.05$, ** $P<.01$, *** $P<.001$

Table 7.2 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types schools, with individual student's suspension experience (SUS_{ij})[+] as the dependent variable, and 1) duration of school attendance (DOA_i), 2) Antisocial Attitude Index score ($ASAI_i$), and 3) being white (RW_i) as the three independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables[++] DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	RW_i	N of students	Multiple R^2	r between SUS and RW
Urban junior high schools	7th	.07**	.11***	-.13***	2059	.04***	-.14
	8th	.06*	.15***	-.12***	2142	.05***	-.14
	9th	.12***	.16***	-.14***	1217	.07***	-.17
Urban senior high schools	9th	.02	.18***	-.11**	634	.05***	-.12
	10th	.08**	.14***	-.14***	1632	.05***	-.15
	11th	.07*	.14***	-.11***	1302	.04***	-.12
	12th	.08**	.18***	-.16***	1108	.06***	-.16
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.14***	-.07***	2904	.03***	-.08
	8th	.01	.21***	-.09***	2805	.05***	-.09
	9th	.02	.23***	-.09**	1021	.06***	-.10
Suburban senior high schools	9th	.02	.23***	-.11***	1081	.07***	-.11
	10th	.10***	.19***	-.05*	1671	.05***	-.05
	11th	.05*	.15***	-.11***	1574	.04***	-.11
	12th	.00	.20***	-.10***	1274	.05***	-.11
Rural junior high schools	7th	.03	.12***	-.09***	1770	.03***	-.10
	8th	-.03	.19***	-.08***	1737	.04***	-.10
	9th	-.01	.16***	-.16***	530	.05***	-.17
Rural senior high schools	9th	-.02	.12***	-.08*	789	.02***	-.09
	10th	.00	.18***	-.06	972	.03***	-.05
	11th	.01	.16***	-.07*	1015	.03***	-.09
	12th	.04	.18***	-.13***	826	.05***	-.14

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=the Antisocial Attitude Index score for the student i, 3) RW_i=the racial identity of the student i, 1=white, other than Spanish American, 0=otherwise.

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

*** $P < .001$

Table 7.3 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable+, and 1) duration of school attendance, 2) Antisocial Attitude Index score, 3) the percentage of students in the school considering their teachers as not being interested, 4) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule, 6) school's Student Governance Scale score, 7) the student's having an above average GPA, and 8) the student's racial identity of being white as the eight independent variables.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables++								N of Students	Multiple R^2
		DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	TNI_j	$SISP_j$	$DBAR_j$	SGS_j	GPA_i	RW_i		
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.10***	-.05	.12***	.01	-.09***	-.09***	-.08**	2059	.07***
	8th	.08***	.13***	-.04	.09***	.04	-.13***	-.09***	-.06**	2142	.08***
	9th	.14***	.13***	-.01	.14***	-.02	-.03	-.16***	-.13***	1217	.11***
Urban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.16***	-.09*	.02	.19***	-.22***	-.04	-.09*	634	.10***
	10th	.07**	.11***	.07*	-.04	.09***	-.08**	-.14***	-.13***	1632	.09***
	11th	.07*	.11***	.01	-.03	.13***	-.04	-.13***	-.10***	1302	.07***
	12th	.07*	.14***	.09**	.02	.11***	-.04	-.11***	-.13***	1108	.10***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.12***	.02	.06**	.04*	-.06*	-.07***	-.05*	2904	.05***
	8th	.02	.19***	.04	.04*	.08***	-.04	-.08***	-.07***	2805	.08***
	9th	.02	.19***	.04	-.00	.05	-.13**	-.08**	-.08*	1021	.09***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	-.00	.21***	.07	.04	-.02	-.03	-.09**	-.09**	1081	.08***
	10th	.06*	.14***	.03	.02	.12***	-.03	-.16***	-.02	1671	.10***
	11th	.01	.10***	-.01	.09***	.09***	-.07*	-.15***	-.06*	1574	.09***
	12th	-.01	.16***	-.05	.07*	.06	-.03	-.16***	-.06*	1274	.09***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.04	.11***	.01	.01	.05	-.05	-.01	-.07**	1770	.03***
	8th	-.01	.17***	.08**	.01	.09**	.02	-.06*	-.05*	1737	.06***
	9th	.04	.13**	.08	.11*	.14**	-.04*	-.09	-.09*	530	.10***
Rural senior high schools	9th	.03	.11**	-.01	.07	.13***	-.05	-.11**	-.06	789	.06***
	10th	.03	.16***	-.01	.04	.10**	-.02	-.11**	-.01	972	.06***
	11th	.02	.14***	-.01	-.01	.12***	-.05	-.10**	-.04	1015	.06***
	12th	.04	.16***	.01	-.02	.09*	-.01	-.14***	-.10**	826	.08***

+ A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

++ The symbol of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of school attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=Antisocial Attitude Index score of the student i, 3) TNI_j=the percentage of the students in student i's school considering their teachers as not being interested, 4) $SISP_j$=the percentage of teachers in the student i's school considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) $DBAR_j$=the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule in student i's school, 6) SGS_j=the school j's Student Governance Scale score, 7) GPA_i=the grade point average of student i as reported by the student; with 1=above average or better (B or above), and 0=otherwise, 8) RW_i=the racial identity of the student i, 1=white, other than Spanish American, 0=otherwise.

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

Table 7.4 Standardized regression coefficients for six types of schools, with school suspension rate (SSR_j)+ as the dependent variable, and 1) schools' Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale score (SAB_j), 2) the percentage of students considering their teachers as not interested (TNI_j), 3) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$), 4) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$), 5) school's Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j), 6) the average percentage of low ability students reported by the teachers (LAS_j), 7) the percentage of white students (RW_j), and 8) the percentage of students with low socioeconomic status ($LSES_j$) as the independent variables.

Independent variables	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student Attidues/ Behavior Scale score ($SABS_j$)	-.16	-.13	-.30**	-.36***	-.47***	-.21
% of students considering their teachers as not being interested (TNI_j)	-.07	.17	.15	.06	.29**	.01
% of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems ($SISP_j$)	.27**	-.01	.12	.10	-.11	.05
% of teachers reporting that student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule ($DBAR_j$)	.17	.46***	.17*	.28**	.14	.52***
Student Governance Scale score (SGS_j)	-.15	-.18	-.15	-.05	.20	-.16
Average percentage of low ability students reported by teachers (LAS_j)	-.03	.10	.00	.09	.05	.09
Percentage of white students (RW_j)	-.29*	-.41**	-.15	-.02	-.19	.01
Percentage of students with low socio-economic status ($LSES_j$)	.04	-.28	.08	.06	-.00	.05
Multiple R^2	.47***	.37***	.48***	.44***	.39***	.41***
N of schools	104	103	121	118	76	82
Pearson's r between school suspension rate (SSR_j) and $LSES_j$	.44	.19	.35	.33	.18	.26

+ The suspension rate for a school j (SSR_j) is measured by the percentage of students in that school who have been suspended from the school at least once as reported by the students themselves. * $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$, *** $P < .001$

Table 7.5 Standardized regression coefficients for twenty-one subgroups of students in six types of schools, with individual student's suspension experience as the dependent variable,[+] and 1) duration of school attendance, 2) Antisocial Attitude Index score, 3) the percentage of students in the school considering their teachers as not being interested, 4) the percentage of teachers considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule, 6) school's Student Governance Scale score, 7) the student's having an above average GPA, 8) racial identity, 9) receiving free lunches at school, 10) frequency of talking about school by parents as the independent variable.

School location and level	Major grade level	Independent variables[++]									N of students	Multiple R^2
		DOA_i	$ASAI_i$	TNI_j	$SISP_j$	$DBAR_j$	SGS_j	GPA_i	BW_i	FL_i	$PTAS_i$	
Urban junior high schools	7th	.08**	.10***	-.04	.12***	.01	-.09**	-.09***	-.06*	.03	.02	2059	.08***
	8th	.08***	.12***	-.04	.09***	.04	-.12***	-.08***	-.06*	.03	-.05*	2142	.09***
	9th	.14***	.13***	-.00	.14***	-.02	-.03	-.15***	-.11***	.05	-.05	1217	.12***
Urban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.16***	-.09	-.02	.18***	-.22***	-.04	-.09*	.00	-.05	634	.12***
	10th	.07**	.11***	.07*	-.04	.10***	-.08**	-.13***	-.13***	.02	-.04	1632	.09***
	11th	.07*	.11***	.01	-.03	.13***	-.04	-.12***	-.10**	.00	-.04	1302	.08***
	12th	.07*	.14***	.09**	.02	.11***	-.04	-.11***	-.13***	.00	-.03	1108	.10***
Suburban junior high schools	7th	.04*	.11***	.02	.05**	.04*	-.05*	-.07***	-.03	.08***	.04*	2904	.06***
	8th	.02	.18***	.04	.04*	.08***	-.04	-.08***	-.06**	.01	-.03	2805	.08***
	9th	.03	.19***	.04	-.00	.05	-.13**	-.08**	-.06	.05	-.02	1021	.10***
Suburban senior high schools	9th	-.01	.20***	.07*	.04	-.02	-.03	-.08*	-.08*	.05	-.05	1081	.09***
	10th	.06*	.14***	.04	.02	.12***	-.02	-.16***	-.01	.02	-.01	1671	.10***
	11th	.01	.10***	-.01	.08**	.09***	-.08	-.15***	-.06*	.05	-.02	1574	.09***
	12th	-.00	.15***	-.06	.06*	.06*	-.04	-.15***	-.06*	.00	-.07*	1272	.09***
Rural junior high schools	7th	.03	.11***	.01	.01	.04	-.05	-.01	-.05	.07**	-.00	1770	.03***
	8th	-.01	.17***	.08**	.01	.07**	.02	-.05	-.04	.05	-.05*	1737	.07***
	9th	.04	.13**	.09	.11*	13**	-.04	-.08	-.07	.06	-.01	530	.11***
Rural senior high schools	9th	.04	.09*	-.01	.07	.13**	-.05	-.09*	-.05	.04	-.09*	789	.07***
	10th	.03	.13***	-.01	.03	.10**	-.02	-.10**	-.01	.01	-.10**	972	.07***
	11th	.02	.13***	-.01	-.01	.12***	-.05	-.09**	-.04	-.01	-.07*	1015	.06***
	12th	.04	.16***	.01	-.03	.08*	-.02	-.13***	-.07	.09***	.02	826	.09***

[+] A student i's suspension experience in a school j (SUS_{ij}) is measured by 1=having been suspended, 0=otherwise.

[++] The symbols of the independent variables are as follows: 1) DOA_i=duration of school attendance for the student i, 2) $ASAI_i$=Antisocial Attitude Index score of the student i, 3) TNI_j=the percentage of the students in student i's school considering their teachers as not being interested, 4) $SISP_j$=the percentage of teachers in the student i's school considering students as incapable of solving problems, 5) $DBAR_j$=the percentage of teachers reporting student behavior problems as being handled by administrative rule in student i's school, 6) SGS_j=the school j's Student Governance Scale score, 7) GPA_i=the grade point average of student i as reported by the student; with 1=above average or better (B or above), and 0=otherwise, 8) RW_i=the racial identity of the student i, 1=white, other than Spanish American, 0=otherwise, 9) FL_i=receiving free lunch at school cafeteria by the student i, 1=yes, 0=otherwise, 10) $PTAS_i$=frequency of talking about school and and school work by the student's parents, 1=almost never, 2=once or twice a month, 3=once or twice a week, and 4=almost every day. * $P<.05$, ** $P<.01$, *** $P<.001$

Table 7.6 Means of black and white student suspension rate (%) for six types of schools by proportion of white teachers

School location and level	Black student suspension rate*		White student suspension rate**	
	Schools with smaller percentage of white teachers[1]	Schools with larger percentage of white teachers[1]	Schools with smaller percentage of white teachers[1]	Schools with larger percentage of white teachers[1]
Urban junior high schools	23 (32)	23 (23)	7 (14)	13 (12)
Urban senior high schools	21 (30)	22 (27)	12 (14)	12 (11)
Suburban junior high schools	24 (9)	15 (7)	10 (9)	7 (7)
Suburban senior high schools	24 (7)	14 (8)	23 (5)	9 (8)
Rural junior high schools	13 (10)	15 (6)	8 (10)	8 (6)
Rural senior high schools	19 (9)	21 (4)	7 (7)	8 (4)

* The schools included in the calculation of the black student suspension rates are those with at least 10 black student respondents in the student questionnaire survey.

** The schools included in the calculation of the white student suspension rates are those schools which have at least 10 black and 10 white student respondents in the student questionnaire survey.

[1] Schools with a smaller percentage of white teachers refer to the schools with less than 80% of the teachers self-identified as white. Schools with a larger percentage of white teachers refer to the schools where 80% or more of the teachers identified by themselves as white. The 80% cutting point is used in all dichotomies in this table except in the computation of black student suspension rate in urban junior and senior high schools where a 70% cutting point was used instead.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study we have found that student suspension in fact hasa basis in the attitudes and behavior of students. To the extent that this is true, we should not consider suspensions as totally arbitrary. Student misbehavior, although important, is not the only factor determining whether a student will or will not be suspended from school. Students' chances of being suspended are also affected by their teachers' perceptions and beliefs, their school's administrative structure in handling disciplinary matters, and the presence of certain institutional biases in their schools. To be specific, we have found that, in addition to their behavior, students' chances of being suspended also increase if:

1) Teachers are seen by students as relatively uninterested in them

2) Teachers believe that students are incapable of solving problems

3) Disciplinary matters are handled largely by administrative rules

4) The school is not able to provide consistent and fair governance

5) There is a relatively high degree of academic bias among school personnel

6) There is a relatively high degree of racial bias present at the school

Since students were asked if they had ever been suspended from their school, duration of attendance was controlled in these analyses.

Undoubtedly, we have missed other factors in student suspension. The fact these six school-related factors affect suspension rates indicates, however, a fundamental characteristic about student suspension: It is not simply a matter of student misbehavior, but also a matter of the way in which different schools operate. As a matter of fact, it is more the ways in which different schools operate than the ways in which students in different schools behave.

As shown in Table 8.1, the six school factors are far more powerful in explaining the school suspension rate than student attitudes and behavior. In partitioning the variance explained in Table 8.1, we attributed to individual students the responsibility for causing suspension only to the extent that suspensions are explainable by their antisocial attitudes and misbehavior. All other variables that further explain the student suspension rate are considered responsibilities of the schools. Notice here that we are not making a distinction between individual student variables and school variables.

Rather, the distinction that we are making is between what should and should not be student's responsibilities, in accordance with the general rule of equal behavior deserving equal discipline. For this reason, students' racial background and their ability, as viewed by the teachers, are not treated together with their antisocial attitudes and misbehavior, since minority students and low ability students, like others, should be suspended no more than their antisocial attitudes and misbehavior would warrant. The partition of variance in Table 8.1 reflects this consideration. The variance in student suspensions explained uniquely by the school responsibility factors is still large and sufficient to attest to the important role of the schools in suspensions.

Now, to be extremely conservative and clear in our approach, let us take one step backward and repartition the explained variance in student suspensions with the assumption that schools are bias-free; that is, they are free of academic bias, free of bias against minority students, and free of favoritism for the students of the majority race. From this assumption, we shall consider not only that minority and low ability students are more antisocial in their attitudes and that they misbehave more as our scale and analysis have shown (and they in fact paid their dues--being suspended more--for this), but also that there are other suspendable personal characteristics unique among minority and low ability students which our attitude and behavior scale is unable to detect and measure. Following this assumption, we therefore repartition the explained variance in student suspensions by treating race and low ability as two additional variables measuring students' attitudes and behavior. The results of this approach are presented in Table 8.2,. We notice from this table that, even excluding minority race status and low ability status of the students, the four school responsibility factors (i.e. 1 through 4 on page 8-1) in this alternative approach still account for more unique variance in students suspension than do the three student responsibility factors in four of the six subgroups of schools analyzed.

In conclusion, the traditional question frequently asked in the case of student suspensions is: "What did the student do wrong at school?" The results of this study suggest that this is an incomplete question. Indeed, it may not be the most productive or most important question to ask. One additional question must be asked: "What kind of school did the student go to, and how was that school run?" Student suspensions is a matter of student misbehavior; but it is also a matter of how the school treats its students.

Table 8.1 Partition of variance explained by student attitudes/ behavior and the six school factors discussed in the text.

Percent of variance in student suspension rate explained by:	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student attitudes/ behavior uniquely	1.2	.6	4.8	7.8	13.3	3.4
School factors uniquely	20.8	26.2	17.6	15.2	16.6	32.5
Student attitudes/ behavior and the school factors commonly	25.0	8.1	25.4	20.8	9.0	5.3
Total percent of variance in student suspension rate explained by student attitudes/behavior and the six school factors jointly	47.0	34.9	47.8	43.8	38.9	41.2

* The six school factors are 1) teachers perceived as not interested in students, 2) teachers' belief that students are not capable of solving problems through logical reasoning, 3) centralized administrative control in student disciplinary matters, 4) weak student governance, 5) academic bias, and 6) racial bias. Readers should consult the earlier text for the exact wordings of these factors.

Table 8.2 Alternative partition of the explained variance in student suspension with the assumption that schools are free of racial and academic biases.

Percentage of variance in student suspension rate explained by:	Urban junior high schools	Urban senior high schools	Suburban junior high schools	Suburban senior high schools	Rural junior high schools	Rural senior high schools
Student responsibility[1] factors uniquely	11.3	7.5	8.4	13.0	19.7	4.2
School responsibility[2] factors uniquely	12.3	23.3	8.6	9.5	8.3	22.9
School and student responsibility factors commonly	13.3	4.1	30.7	21.3	10.9	14.1
Total percentage of variance in student suspension rate explained by student and school responsiblity factors jointly	47.0	34.9	47.8	43.8	38.9	41.2

[1] Student responsibility factors re 1) student attitudes and behavior, 2) minority race (nonwhite) status, and 3) low ability of student

[2] School responsibility factors are 1) teachers perceived as not interested in students, 2) teachers' belief that students are not capable of solving problems through logical reasoning, 3) centralized administrative control in student disciplinary matters, and 4) weak student governance.

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Appendix

Table A3.1 Percentage of students who gave antisocial responses to the eight items* of the Antisocial Attitude Index by major grade level, school location and school level.

School location and level	Grade level	N of students	Item (1)	Item (2)	Item (3)	Item (4)	Item (5)	Item (6)	Item (7)	Item (8)	Mean of score of Antisocia Attitude Index
Urban junior high schools	7th	2059	40	40	22	37	10	6	5	12	1.37
	8th	2142	41	41	22	33	15	5	5	16	1.41
	9th	1217	36	36	21	33	21	7	6	21	1.50
Urban senior high schools	9th	634	36	36	15	33	16	4	4	18	1.31
	10th	1632	32	6	16	28	20	4	5	23	1.31
	11th	1302	28	4	13	28	23	3	3	27	1.27
	12th	1108	27	4	12	29	21	3	4	24	1.23
Suburban junior high schools	7th	2904	39	7	20	29	9	5	4	11	1.22
	8th	2805	36	7	21	29	17	6	5	19	1.38
	9th	1021	33	7	20	29	24	7	7	28	1.55
Suburban senior high schools	9th	1081	32	6	16	26	18	5	5	21	1.28
	10th	1671	30	7	14	24	23	5	4	28	1.32
	11th	1574	27	5	14	25	27	4	3	36	1.42
	12th	1272	25	2	13	27	25	3	3	38	1.36
Rural junior high schools	7th	1770	40	7	21	30	9	4	4	10	1.23
	8th	1737	38	6	22	28	15	6	4	16	1.34
	9th	530	36	5	21	29	24	9	6	24	1.50
Rural senior high schools	9th	789	35	5	20	29	19	4	4	21	1.35
	10th	972	29	4	19	24	21	6	3	27	1.31
	11th	1015	30	3	16	24	21	4	3	30	1.31
	12th	826	22	2	14	21	22	4	1	34	1.18
Urban junior high schools	All	5490	39	9	22	35	15	6	6	16	1.42
Urban senior high schools	All	4773	30	5	14	29	21	4	4	24	1.28
Suburban junior high schools	All	6771	37	7	20	29	15	6	5	17	1.34
Suburban senior high schools	All	5813	29	5	15	25	23	4	4	30	1.35
Rural senior high schools	All	4121	39	6	21	29	14	6	4	14	1.31
Rural junior high schools	All	4135	30	4	18	25	20	5	3	26	1.29

* Item (1) = % of students who answer "agree" to the statement that "people who leave things around deserve it if their things get taken". Item (2) = % of students who answer "agree" to the statement that "taking things from store doesn't hurt anyone". Item (3) = % of students who answer "agree" to the statement that "people who get beat up usually asked for it". Item (4) = % of students who answer "agree" to the statement that "if you want to get ahead, you can't always be honest". Items (5), (6), (7), & (8) are % of students who answer "yes" to the question "Would you do any of the following things if you knew you can get away with it?' (5) = cheat on a test, (6)=spray paint on school walls, (7)=take money from other students, (8) = skip school.

Table A3.2 Pearson's zero-order correlation coefficients between individual student's having suspension experience and the student's anti-social responses to the eight items of Antisocial Attitude Index, by major level, and by school location and school level.

School location and level	Grade level	N of students	Item (1)	Item (2)	Item (3)	Item (4)	Item (5)	Item (6)	Item (7)	Item (8)
Urban junior high schools	7th	2059	.01	.09	.08	.06	.07	.05	.10	.08
	8th	2142	.00	.11	.07	.07	.09	.13	.12	.14
	9th	1217	.06	.12	.10	.08	.09	.12	.09	.11
Urban senior high schools	9th	634	.07	.23	.08	.05	.06	.05	.04	.16
	10th	1632	.06	.08	.07	.10	.08	.09	.06	.10
	11th	1302	.01	.11	.06	.04	.06	.13	.16	.14
	12th	1108	.09	.06	.08	.10	.08	.16	.10	.11
Suburban junior high schools	7th	2904	-.01	.13	.06	.06	.09	.13	.04	.15
	8th	2805	.06	.17	.12	.09	.13	.15	.15	.18
	9th	1021	.05	.14	.13	.07	.07	.17	.18	.24
Suburban senior high schools	9th	1081	.06	.19	.10	.05	.10	.17	.14	.24
	10th	1671	.05	.10	.16	.09	.10	.14	.10	.13
	11th	1574	.03	.13	.05	.10	.07	.11	.04	.13
	12th	1272	.05	.06	.09	.09	.15	.10	.10	.13
Rural junior high schools	7th	1770	.03	.05	.09	.05	.08	.13	.07	.06
	8th	1737	.03	.12	.10	.04	.08	.18	.20	.15
	9th	530	.04	.13	.11	.03	.09	.16	.07	.17
Rural senior high schools	9th	789	-.01	.05	.11	.01	.10	.11	.11	.11
	10th	972	.02	.01	.10	.08	.12	.15	.05	.15
	11th	1015	.09	.01	.10	.05	.08	.17	.12	.13
	12th	826	.04	.09	.16	.14	.07	.05	.00	.13
Urban junior high schools	All	5490	.02	.10	.07	.06	.10	.11	.11	.13
Urban senior high schools	All	4773	.05	.10	.07	.08	.08	.12	.10	.13
Suburban junior high schools	All	6771	.03	.15	.10	.07	.12	.15	.13	.20
Suburban senior high schools	All	5813	.04	.11	.10	.09	.11	.13	.10	.16
Rural junior high schools	All	4121	.03	.08	.10	.04	.09	.16	.12	.14
Rural senior high schools	All	4135	.03	.03	.10	.06	.10	.10	.09	.14

Individual student's suspension experience is measured by 1=yes, have been suspended from the current school, 0=no.

Items (1) through (8) are measured as follows: 1=antisocial response, 0=otherwise. For the definition of antisocial response to each of these items and the wordings of the items, see notes in Table A3.1.

Table A3.3 Means, standard deviations, and the inter-correlation matrix of the variables in the Student Attitudes/Behavior Scale, and their Pearson's zero-order correlation coefficients with school suspension rate.

Variable name*	Mean	Standard deviation	ASQ243	ASQ249	ASQ256	ASQ259	TQ153	Pearson's r with suspension rate
Urban junior high schools:								
ASQ243	75.019	8.826						-.485
ASQ249	34.988	8.856	.413					-.363
ASQ256	82.740	8.276	.457	.094				-.198
ASQ259	82.905	7.270	.479	.242	.651			-.283
TQ153	31.632	17.235	.290	.333	.139	.179		-.331
TQ157	70.827	20.296	.355	.382	.156	.181	.793	-.430
Urban senior high schools:								
ASQ243	80.885	9.651						-.226
ASQ249	41.759	11.643	.666					-.388
ASQ256	88.876	6.464	.530	.354				-.077
ASQ259	86.294	6.910	.557	.458	.668			-.139
TQ153	44.413	18.849	.451	.501	.274	.347		-.247
TQ157	79.804	15.712	.452	.546	.198	.307	.800	-.241
Suburban junior high schools:								
ASQ243	80.085	7.249						-.498
ASQ249	38.814	8.959	.544					-.275
ASQ256	84.148	6.798	.492	.324				-.330
ASQ259	82.642	6.794	.479	.421	.505			-.313
TQ153	51.117	18.173	.337	.266	.286	.375		-.350
TQ157	90.597	9.741	.322	.292	.254	.205	.643	-.486
Suburban senior high schools:								
ASQ243	83.516	8.615						-.412
ASQ249	45.411	10.349	.566					-.392
ASQ256	87.119	7.246	.464	.284				-.190
ASQ259	87.445	6.860	.602	.349	.519			-.312
TQ153	53.338	14.736	.151	.293	.013	.136		-.279
TQ157	90.654	8.244	.320	.290	.100	.161	.584	-.483
Rural junior high schools:								
ASQ243	81.664	7.111						-.298
ASQ249	42.636	9.081	.353					-.161
ASQ256	84.515	7.598	.426	.221				-.235
ASQ259	86.762	6.984	.530	.252	.603			-.226
TQ153	57.450	17.773	.134	.038	.239	.235		-.349
TQ157	92.653	9.215	.102	.097	.158	.000	.460	-.396
Rural senior high schools:								
ASQ243	86.629	6.630						-.321
ASQ249	50.130	8.869	.290					-.097
ASQ256	86.638	6.335	.262	.181				-.276
ASQ259	90.203	5.458	.365	.396	.251			-.289
TQ153	61.780	16.516	.141	.267	.202	.200		-.044
TQ157	93.152	6.282	.100	.039	.202	.237	.538	-.165

* ASQ243= % of students who disagree that "taking things from stores doesn't hurt anyone"; ASQ249= % of students who disagree that "if you want to get ahead, you can't always be honest"; ASQ256= % of students who say that they would spray paint on school walls; ASQ259= % of students who they would take money from other students; TQ153= % of teachers who say that they were never sworn at by their students; TQ157= % of teachers who say that they were never threatened by their students.

Table A5.1 Means, standard deviations, and the inter-correlation matrix of the variables in the Student Governance Scale, and their Pearson's zero-order correlation coefficients with school suspension rate.

Variable name*	Mean	Standard deviation	ASQ106	ASQ163	TQ356	ASQ210	ASQ100	ASQ103	ASQ166	ASQ222	Pearson's r with suspension rate
Urban junior high schools:											
ASQ106	11.848	6.691									.267
ASQ163	9.541	5.472	.403								.280
TQ356	6.986	5.879	-.124	-.286							-.275
ASQ210	15.828	8.823	.469	.400	-.274						.332
ASQ100	13.193	8.238	.327	.277	-.131	.579					.326
ASQ103	13.397	6.048	.273	.305	-.125	.341	.278				.074
ASQ166	13.663	5.334	.386	.232	-.078	.425	.370	.234			.225
ASQ222	15.090	8.866	.276	.166	-.061	.598	.489	.174	.291		.301
TQ210	29.791	13.678	-.104	-.157	.261	-.231	-.224	.114	-.036	-.173	-.202
Urban senior high schools:											
ASQ106	10.679	6.495									-.075
ASQ163	7.837	5.126	.295								.261
TQ356	9.172	8.507	-.248	-.293							-.171
ASQ210	15.751	9.047	.405	.257	-.218						.217
ASQ100	10.618	6.987	.185	.311	-.202	.331					.268
ASQ103	14.786	8.146	.058	-.001	-.042	.226	.400				.089
ASQ166	9.052	4.758	.163	.350	-.169	.345	.365	.105			.190
ASQ222	12.241	7.973	.216	.192	-.184	.495	.319	.274	.162		.137
TQ210	31.322	16.384	-.088	-.087	.475	-.232	-.328	-.222	-.182	-.257	-.430
Suburban junior high schools:											
ASQ106	8.938	4.801									.230
ASQ163	5.607	3.944	.312								.385
TQ356	10.889	10.513	-.008	-.205							-.208
ASQ210	11.505	6.881	.219	.278	-.170						.225
ASQ100	10.537	6.968	.232	.516	-.268	.332					.349
ASQ103	12.893	5.815	.169	.263	-.102	.409	.488				.302
ASQ166	12.086	5.749	.289	.467	-.201	.127	.555	.409			.410
ASQ222	13.037	8.536	.193	.281	-.115	.614	.526	.624	.297		.352
TQ210	34.310	16.495	-.017	-.260	-.248	-.267	-.306	-.355	-.192	-.196	-.115
Suburban senior high schools:											
ASQ106	8.101	5.617									-.060
ASQ163	5.693	4.565	.321								.290
TQ356	9.963	9.530	-.042	-.187							-.075
ASQ210	14.073	7.821	.282	.233	-.066						.280
ASQ100	9.571	6.598	-.084	.246	-.123	.275					.376
ASQ103	15.535	7.658	.123	.176	-.092	.249	.299				-.007
ASQ166	7.657	4.391	.185	.516	-.119	.256	.456	.411			.279
ASQ222	13.456	11.006	-.168	.130	-.043	.364	.649	.372	.425		.265
TQ210	26.296	14.802	-.093	-.125	.486	-.195	-.192	-.283	-.041	-.188	.031
Rural junior high schools:											
ASQ106	9.397	5.863									.187
ASQ163	6.365	3.670	.309								.168
TQ356	12.771	10.601	-.151	-.053							-.166
ASQ210	12.091	8.787	.492	.087	-.217						.181
ASQ100	9.977	6.617	.164	.250	-.150	.298					.098
ASQ103	12.635	6.150	.198	.187	-.289	.287	.350				.002
ASQ166	11.641	5.676	.219	.364	-.120	.338	.558	.345			.252
ASQ222	13.703	8.902	.245	.253	-.212	.462	.512	.515	.415		.120
TQ210	35.604	17.831	- 120	.165	.259	-.254	-.031	-.316	-.172	-.256	-.074
Rural senior high schools:											
ASQ106	8.334	5.617									.109
ASQ163	4.868	3.723	.456								.092
TQ356	12.372	12.015	-.193	-.034							-.015
ASQ210	14.002	9.630	.293	.226	-.156						-.003
ASQ100	9.322	5.783	.190	.244	-.134	.379					.212
ASQ103	17.842	8.770	.416	.302	-.093	.463	.440				-.011
ASQ166	9.231	4.989	.278	.413	.055	.342	.476	.480			.179
ASQ222	16.957	11.779	.166	.166	-.079	.468	.658	.544	.574		.103
TQ210	28.781	17.714	-.192	-.124	.571	.284	-.143	-.128	-.105	-.165	.040

* ASQ106= % of students who report that the school rules are almost never strictly enforced; ASQ163= % of students who report that the teachers at their school almost never keep order in class; TQ356= % of teachers who report that the teachers always maintain order in class; ASQ210= % of students who disagree that their principal runs the school with firm hand; ASQ100= % of students who believe that the school rules are almost never fair; ASQ103= % of students who believe that it is almost never true that in their school, the punishment for breaking the school rules is the same no matter who you are; ASQ166= % of students who believe that the teachers in their school are almost never fair; ASQ222= % of students who disagree with the statement that "the principal is fair"; TQ210= % of teachers who believe that the statement " all students are treated equally" very much describes their school.